

PZ
3

S215M

FT MEADE
GenColl

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

Chap. 35 Copyright No. _____

Shelf PZ 3
S215M

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.







No. 71

The
Midnight Elopement

—OR—

ROBERT WAYNE'S CHOICE.

A Sensational Novel.

By Emma Sanders.



NEW YORK:
J. S. OGILVIE, PUBLISHER,
57 Rose Street.

BEECHAM'S PILLS

Painless.

Effectual.

In many towns where this wonderful medicine has been introduced, and given a fair trial, it has abolished the family medicine chest, and been found sufficient to cure nine-tenths of the ordinary complaints incident to humanity; and when diseases of months and years are thus removed or palliated in a few days, it is not wonderful that Beecham's Pills should maintain their acknowledged popularity in both hemispheres. *They cost only 25 cents*, although the proverbial expression all over the world is that they are "worth a guinea a box," for in truth one box will oftentimes be the means of saving more than one guinea in doctor's bills



REMEMBER THAT BEECHAM'S PILLS



—ARE—

A WONDERFUL MEDICINE

—FOR ALL—

BILIOUS AND NERVOUS DISORDERS

—SUCH AS—

CONSTIPATION,
WEAK STOMACH,
SICK - HEADACHE,
LOSS OF APPETITE,
IMPAIRED DIGESTION,
DISORDERED LIVER AND ALL KINDRED DISEASES.

Prepared only by Thos. Beecham, St. Helens, Lancashire, England. B. F. Allen Co., Sole Agents for United States, 365 and 367 Canal St., N. Y., who (if your druggist does not keep them) will mail Beecham's Pills on receipt of price, 25c.—but inquire first. Correspondents will please mention J. S. OGILVIE'S Books.

THE MIDNIGHT ELOPEMENT;

OR,

ROBERT WAYNE'S CHOICE.

AN EMOTIONAL NOVEL.

BY EMMA SANDERS.

40
Peerless

THE PEERLESS SERIES, No. 71. Issued Quarterly. August, 1893. \$1.00 per year. Entered at
New York Post-Office as second-class matter. Copyright, 1893, by J. S. Ogilvie.



NEW YORK :
J. S. OGILVIE, PUBLISHER,
57 ROSE STREET.

THE MIDNIGHT ELOPEMENT.

CHAPTER I.

A RISKY BUSINESS.

“So, my boy, you are in love? And you think you have secured the best little woman living? I sincerely hope so for your own sake, for a man’s future depends very much on the woman he marries. It is a risky business to say the least.”

And as Dr. Wayne spoke he laid his hand tenderly on his young friend’s shoulder, but there was a sad light in his eye, and he looked even more dejected than usual.

This was certainly the first intimation that Edward Hawley had received that the doctor’s married life was not as harmonious as it should have been—for in what other way could he have construed his friend’s utterances?

Personally, Dr. Wayne might have been called handsome. It is true, he was slightly humpbacked, which deformity was not so much noticed perhaps by strangers as felt by himself. In this respect he was abnormally sensitive, being under the impression at times that he was either pitied or scorned for his affliction; and both feelings were extremely irritating to one of his keen sensibilities and cultured mind.

His features were massive and regular, with kindly gray eyes shining out from beneath clearly-marked brows; his mustache and hair were of a dark brown, silken and glossy to a degree; and although not over thirty-five years, there were lines of suffering on his brow and about his mouth which made him look many years older.

In fact Dr. Wayne had suffered and had suffered in silence; his married life had been unhappy, but his natural reticence had concealed this from even his most intimate friends.

“My dear doctor,” returned Edward earnestly, “I thank you a thousand times for your deep interest in my welfare, and I know you mean what you have said for my good; but indeed if you knew Agnes you would not think it necessary to feel the slightest anxiety as to my future. She is so far above others of her sex in every particular—so sweet, so good. In fact,” he added with ardent pride, “she *is* the dearest little woman in the world.”

Dr. Wayne smiled pityingly at his friend’s enthusiasm. He remembered how he too had thought thus of his wife some ten years before, yet his life with her had been a miserable disappointment. And now, he fancied he saw a similar experience mapped out for his friend. Edward was but twenty-five—the same age at which he had fallen in love. He did not consider that the woman Edward loved might be utterly different to his wife, or that the style of woman he detested, his friend might admire. He saw only that the young man was on the verge of doing an act which might mar his whole life, and with the impulse of his strong sympathy he longed to save him. Accordingly he said:

“Edward, life is poor indeed to a loving nature without a woman’s affection; it is bare and empty. But there is something worse—a wife who does not love or understand you; who may be intelligent, but unsuited to you, tender to others, but heartless to her husband, perhaps only because she cannot love him. Love is terrible as well as sublime; it cannot be forced and a man is only a child in experience concerning married life if he has never been married. It is surprising the world is as good as it is, when one considers how ill-mated so many people are. Were you to marry this girl whom you say you love, you might lead a happy life together, but, your choice would be the one in a hundred, or

more likely one in a thousand that would so result. Now let me advise you in this matter. You are young, and I suppose she is too——”

“She is eighteen.”

“Very well; then I would advise you to wait four or five years longer before you think of marrying. See more of the young lady; analyze her mind, and see if you are adapted to each other. At your age, it is hard to judge as to whether one will be happy through life in the companionship of a woman one has known but a short time. Many a man, Edward, has wished he had the experience at twenty-five that he must attain probably at thirty or thirty-five. Why? Because he would then have acted *differently*. And in how many, many cases does this mean—the choice of his life mate!”

Wayne ground out the last words with much bitterness; but to Hawley, his tone meant only that he wished to impress him with the importance of his advice.

“Doctor,” he began, after a moment’s hesitation, his voice thrilling with a sincere belief in what he uttered: “there could not be a more perfect little woman in existence, or one more thoroughly adapted to me than Agnes. Now, won’t you give me your best wishes?”

As he ceased speaking, the young man extended his hand which Wayne took in a friendly grasp.

“Well, well, Edward, I hope you *will* be happy! But I fear you only see what is good in the young woman. She may be sweet-tempered and beautiful and all that, but are you sure she will be a fit companion for your manhood—that she will be the sharer of your cares, the confidant of your hopes and ambitions, the helpmate and comforter of your sterner years? Are you sure she will always be as charming as she is now to you, or as she might be in the first few years of wedded life when cares are few?”

“I question if I have ever considered what you have just

alluded to, but I am quite sure Agnes Bonnard would meet every one of those requirements. At any rate, I shall risk it, trusting that my marriage to her will result happily."

Edward spoke earnestly and seemed unable just then to release the doctor's hand which he still held.

"Am I disturbing you in a rehearsal of handshaking?" questioned a blithe voice at this moment.

The hands of both men instinctively fell apart as they started and glanced at the speaker.

She stood in the doorway of the room; her tall, queenly form, in its snug-fitting, dark blue gown, revealed every outline of her perfect figure. The light of the lamp fell full upon a face you would unhesitatingly have pronounced lovely. The blue eyes were large and lustrous; the parted, smiling lips revealed pearl-like teeth, the skin was as daintily tinted as a child's, and the rich, nut-brown hair, piled upon her head, was soft as silk.

Mrs. Wayne, at thirty-two, was as charming and beautiful a woman as you could well meet.

The doctor looked indifferently at his wife, then walked to the bookcase and soon became absorbed in the pages of a volume of poetry, while Hawley advanced to meet his fair hostess.

A moment's silence followed as she seated herself, then looking up, and smiling she said to the young man:

"Will you not admit me into the secret of your handshaking a few moments ago?"

"I was merely saying I hoped my married life, when I do marry, will result as happily—as the doctor's," Hawley said somewhat hesitatingly.

"You seem to have a notion then of marrying?"

"I had no such idea until very recently," said Hawley, an embarrassed flush mounting his temples, "but now—"

"Well, well, I hope the young lady is worthy of you, Mr. Hawley; and I'm sure, I wish you every happiness," interrupted Mrs. Wayne with a gracious smile.

"She is indeed—more than worthy of me; but the doctor seems to think I ought to wait a few years before taking a wife."

"And I repeat it! You ought to wait at least five years, Edward," said Dr. Wayne sharply, glancing up from his book. "A young man of your age is likely to fancy a pretty face, and rush impetuously into matrimony: five or ten years later he may have cause to regret it. So, my boy, take care!"

"But *you* married at twenty-five," interrupted Mrs. Wayne, acridly.

"Quite true," was the doctor's cold reply.

"Perhaps you regret having married so young?" she questioned in a mocking tone.

It is in tormenting moments like these that our natures are roused to assert themselves. A flush reddened Dr. Wayne's cheeks; his eyes flashed with anger. He forgot the presence of Edward Hawley under the influence of his passion. The grosser side of his nature was spurred into terrible action. The words his wife had spoken had struck deeper into his heart, than had she driven a knife into it. Hot, stormy words which had lain dormant in his spirit, struggling for utterance for many a year, arose to his lips.

But just as he was about to give voice to them, a knock at the room door interrupted him. A moment later, in answer to Mrs. Wayne's "Come in," the door opened, and a maid-servant appeared and said, looking at Wayne:

"If you please, sir, there's a gentleman who would like to see you."

With a muttered apology, the doctor followed her from the room.

Edward Hawley, who had been an unwilling witness to this scene, breathed a sigh of relief as Wayne disappeared, thus avoiding what would no doubt have ended in a serious quarrel.

Mrs. Wayne, too, looked relieved and seemed ashamed of

the pique she had shown before her visitor. At least, those were the feelings for which Hawley gave her credit ; but, perhaps, her heart had been touched with the feeling that it was she who was responsible for the unhappiness which existed between herself and her husband.

The doctor, when he had closed the door, leaned heavily against the panelled wall of the hall ; his face was now white with disappointed rage. He was balked when he had thirsted years to say what he could have said so well *then* !

Her utter lack of sympathy, her insults, her selfishness, her want of respect, and indeed every harsh word she had ever spoken, all returned to his mind in that moment and stung with cruel force his aching heart. But, bitterest of all was the knowledge that her nature was not naturally thus—that beneath that cold, unfeeling exterior which she maintained toward him, there beat a heart of remarkable passion and sympathy ; also, an acute intellect, though it had never been in intercourse with his own inner thoughts. But why she should act thus toward him—whose pleasure and happiness it had been to do all in his power for her, was what he could not understand. Even considering that she did not love him, was it not her duty to respect him as her husband, showing that she had at least appreciated his love and kindness !

He had tried, many a time, to discover why she treated him thus, and finding no answer to his many reasonings, had come to the conclusion in his pain and sensitiveness, that she hated and was ashamed of him because of his affliction.

And how he had at one time loved this woman ! He moaned in anguish as he thought of the tender passion he had lavished on her and then compared it with his feelings for her now. But, alas ! sweet happy memories, they fade before the towering reality of the present !

He is again an insulted, outraged man, and it is with a low, but bitterly spoken execration that he finally moves down the hall toward his office.

Having entered the room, he threw himself into a chair and stared gloomily ahead. He was in no mood just then to receive visitors and listen to the sad tales they had to tell ; his heart was scarred too deeply for that.

How often before in this same room, he had laid bare his heart ! Its quiet seclusion had been dearer to him than the friendship of human beings. Here, for ten years had he spent the greater part of each day !

A soft, thick, and cheerful-looking carpet covered the floor ; the walls were painted a delicate pearl-gray ; the furniture of carved oak, was upholstered in dark green leather ; a few rare engravings adorned the walls, while books seemed to meet the eye everywhere ; they were strewn on the table and desk and crowded into the bookcase.

The bright fire in the old-fashioned grate too, gave the room a still more cosy and pleasant look, especially so in contrast to the wretched weather outside, where a wild wind blew the rain clamorously against the window.

But the doctor failed to appreciate the comfort of the apartment on this night, and no wonder ! for, oh ! what terrible anguish it is to feel one's self bound by the ties of duty and honor to live out an unhappy existence. Like a caged bird he longed to flee from his fettered bonds.

Many, many times, when heartaches like the present had assailed him, he had cried in agony and bitterness : " I am accursed ! "

Wealth to some is a blessing ; to *him* it had been a curse ! He knew it had brought him into the pitiable condition of being wedded to one with whom he had not the slightest affinity of thought or feeling. He, whose nature demanded love and sympathy, had only cold indifference from one who should have been, his " star of light."

While thus dismally cogitating, he had failed to hear a light, hesitating tap at the room-door, which the pelting rain at the window had helped to drown. He looked up, however,

with a gesture of annoyance as the door opened, and the servant entering said :

“The gentleman, sir, says you must have forgotten him as he has been waiting a very long time.”

“Ah, yes,” said the doctor, rising, “I will see him at once.”

CHAPTER II.

THE DOCTOR'S VISITOR.

THE church-bells of Brooklyn were ringing for service as Louis Bonnard sprang from a street car into the pouring rain and moaning wind of that wild March night.

The raindrops on the windows of the lighted shops, looked like sparkling gems ; but neither their dazzling radiance, nor the reflection of the lights in the pools of water, which at other times he observed as a pretty sight, attracted his notice.

Mr. Bonnard was in a hurry ; and that meant with him keeping clear of everybody, without observing anything with interest, and walking as rapidly as possible.

He was a tall, strongly-built and attractive looking man. His olive-pale complexion and hair and eyes of jet well suited the noble type of his features. The laughing eyes seemed to tell of a happy spirit, and yet, as you observed closer you could detect a lurking bitterness in their expression. Altogether, Mr. Bonnard was an extraordinary looking man, and even the passers-by in the street seemed to think so, for many turned and looked after him.

As he hurried along, with bent head and hands deep in his coat pockets, he mused :

“I wonder if Edward Hawley has spoken to his friend, Dr. Wayne, about father. I hope so, for I don't like the idea of seeing him without an introduction.”

Presently, as he turned into Schermerhorn Street, he drew up, and began to look about him. A row of elegant brown-stone mansions loomed up on either side of the street. He

walked along, slowly counting the numbers, and finally paused before one which seemed to be the handsomest of all.

He sprang up the stoop, and to assure himself that it was the house he sought, he stooped and examined the name on the door-plate. "Dr. Wayne," stood out in bold relief against the darkness of the door.

His hand was on the bell ; but before he could pull it, there suddenly swelled out on the night air, a woman's rich, alto voice, accompanied by the sound of a piano, in the following words :

"If I could know that after all
These heavy bonds have ceased to thrall,
We whom in life the fates divide
Should sweetly slumber side by side—
That one green spray would drop its dew
Softly alike above us two,
All would be well ; for I should be
At last, dear loving heart, with thee !"

A deep spasm of pain shot through Bonnard's heart ; he leaned over the railing of the stoop, and peered cautiously through the half-closed blinds, into the dimly lit room from whence the singing came.

He saw seated at the piano a beautifully formed woman, but he could not see her face.

It was not the sad yearning of the song that had thrilled his heart with a bitter-sweet pain ; but the voice—Merciful God ! how terribly like it was to the voice of one he had loved over ten years ago.

The voice, full of tears and sad yearning went on :

"How sweet to know this dust of ours,
Mingling, will feed the self-same flowers—
The scent of leaves, the song-birds tone,
At once across our rest be blown.
One breadth of sun, one sheet of rain
Make green the earth above us twain !
Ah ! sweet and strange, for I should be,
At last, dear tender heart, with thee !"

“But half the earth may intervene
Thy place of rest and mine between—
And leagues of land and wastes of waves
May stretch and toss between our graves.
Thy bed with Summer light be warm,
While snowdrifts heap, in wind and storm,
My pillow, whose one thorn will be,
Beloved, that I am not with thee !”

With a wail of utter heart break she ceased singing ; her head sank forward upon the keys of the piano ; her form was convulsed with sobs.

For some minutes she remained thus, then suddenly threw up her head, dashed the tears from her eyes, uttered a wild, mocking laugh, and left the room.

Bonnard drew back from the window with a heavy sigh ; he felt as though he had awakened from a dream.

“That was Mrs. Wayne,” he concluded as he rang the bell.

Five minutes passed yet no one had answered his ring. He touched the bell again, impatiently ; this time after what appeared to be another five minutes the door was opened by a servant.

“Is the doctor within ?” inquired Bonnard.

“Yes, sir.”

“Can I see him ?”

The girl replied in the affirmative. She led him along the hall ; and as he passed one door he heard voices raised in scornful discussion. The servant finally threw open the door of a room to his left, and requested him to wait there while she apprised the doctor.

The first and most natural thing, Mr. Bonnard did after he had taken a seat, was to look about him. But after awhile as the doctor failed to summon him to the office and the objects of the room began to lose their interest, his thoughts drifted to other things.

That voice ! How strangely familiar it was, and what thoughts it conjured up !

Back through the vista of ten long years his memory passed.

He sees himself again as a young fellow of three-and-twenty, and remembers with a keen pang of bitterness one certain evening of those former times.

It was the last day in August. The sun, from where he watched it as he stood in the shaded path, with the woman he loved beside him, looked like an immense golden ball as it began to sink behind the distant mountains and bathe the sky in a tranquil, yellowish light. The sound of the cow bells came faintly from the meadows. Even the little sparrow flying from branch to branch in the tree above them, and the cooling breeze that fanned their faces, was remembered ; so vividly was every occurrence of this night impressed upon his mind.

And the woman beside him ! He saw her again now, as she appeared then ; her tall, graceful form looking taller and more graceful still in its simple, white muslin gown, with the pale pink rosebuds twined in her luxuriant, nut-brown hair, and nestling on her breast. The lovely face was blushing, and the eyes gleamed with a half sad, half tender light.

He remembered, too, the wild thrill of pain that shot through his heart, as he thought that on the morrow he must leave this pleasant country place, where he had spent so many happy weeks with *her*.

He had moved a step nearer to her at this point, had taken her hand, and his voice was soft and low as he uttered her name : " Harriet."

Her blushing face grew a deeper crimson, her eyelids drooped, and her voice faltered as she answered him.

" I leave here to-morrow," he said, watching the effect of his words.

" So soon ! " she exclaimed, her lips quivering.

" I have delayed my going already longer than I should have done. Will you think sometimes of the hours we have spent together when I am gone ? "

"Yes, I shall think of them, Mr. Bonnard."

"And of me?"

"I could not possibly think of them unless I thought of you, too," she returned, and her eyes met his in a glance that made his heart beat rapidly.

"Harriet, are you sorry I must go away?" he asked clasping her hands and gazing searchingly into her downcast face.

She shrank from him, and covered her eyes with her hands.

He drew nearer, his face flushing with hope; he stole his arm with gentle force about her waist and drew her close to him.

"You love me, Harriet," he boldly asserted.

She only moaned in answer.

"My darling, won't you answer me?" continued Bonnard, passionately. "Won't you tell me that you love me, and that at some future day you will make me happy by becoming my wife?"

She was a long time in answering, but at length faltered:

"I love you!"

"You are sure of it, dearest? You see," he added with a bright smile, "this is an important matter, and I must be exacting."

"Ah, you need not doubt me; I love you only too well."

Her reply evidently pleased him, for he said nothing further on the subject; nevertheless it was not the binding vow he had sought. But he had gone away confident that she would some day become his wife.

A year later when he returned to claim her, she was gone—married to a man of wealth.

At the time he never thought of asking his rival's name, nor had he ever learned it since. Indeed, he had no desire to know it, for he never wanted to see again the woman who had so shamefully deceived him.

"She was unworthy of my love!" he had cried in his anguish. "I shall learn to forget her!"

But he was not a man to easily forget anything. His love for her now, ten years later, was as intense as it ever had been.

Suddenly, Mr. Bonnard's thoughts were brought back to the present, by the opening of the room-door. The servant ushered in an elderly lady; and at the same time, Mr. Bonnard became aware that he had been waiting over half an hour to interview the doctor, and his patience was getting exhausted.

He asked the girl to see him and state that he feared he had been forgotten as he had been waiting a long time.

A few minutes later, Bonnard stood in the presence of the doctor, but neither of them even dreamed of how strangely interwoven their lives were to become.

"Dr. Wayne?" questioned Mr. Bonnard, as he closed the office door.

The doctor bowed.

"I have called," his visitor continued, producing his card, "in regard to my father."

"Mr. Louis Bonnard——"

The doctor read the name on the card slowly and aloud; then hastily pushing forward a chair, he kindly said:

"Pray, be seated, Mr. Bonnard. Our mutual friend, Mr. Hawley, has explained your father's case to me. From what he has told me, I fear it is very bad; but, of course, I cannot say so positively until I have seen my patient. You understand that this is merely conjecture as yet," Wayne gently added.

The young man raised his eyes and looked into the doctor's face; the sympathy he read there touched him profoundly. Some moments passed in silence, then he falteringly said:

"Doctor, I deeply appreciate your sympathy, but I am aware it is all true. It is hard though to know that I must lose one for whom I have so tender a love. You will, however, come and see my poor father to-morrow, and do what you can to relieve his sufferings?"

"Very well, Mr. Bonnard; I will call in the morning."

Then Wayne added somewhat impulsively: "Your friend, Mr. Hawley, is in the house; if you desire to see him, I should be delighted to have you remain?"

"No, no, thank you," said Bonnard, and hastily picking up his hat, he arose to leave.

The doctor walked with him to the hall door, and for a few moments stood in the doorway looking after him; then, as he was about to shut the door, a voice from the pavement hailed him.

"Hold on a moment, doctor, don't close the door," and a moment later, a flashily-dressed, bold looking man, sprang up the stoop.

Dr. Wayne detested familiarity, more especially in those whom he disliked, and this one happened to be classed in that category.

"Good evening, Mr. Moore," he coldly replied, without accepting the other's proffered hand.

A baleful light flashed into Moore's eyes, but was instantly suppressed, and he laughingly said:

"Well, I don't know about its being a 'good evening,' doctor; I am rather inclined to think it a bad one—and a very bad one at that. It is so long since I paid my respects to Mrs. Wayne," pursued Moore, "that I thought I would do so this evening."

"You will find her here, I believe," said Wayne, throwing open the door of the room, where he had left his wife and Hawley together.

"Are you not going to join us?" Moore asked, as the doctor retreated toward his office.

"This is one of my business hours," Wayne coldly answered and walked on; he had gone only a few steps, however, when he heard his wife greeting the newcomer in a tone of evident pleasure.

The doctor ground his teeth savagely, and his hands

clenched with the fierce passion that for a moment mastered him.

Meantime, Mrs. Wayne, Hawley, and Moore were holding an animated conversation. Mr. Moore was relating how he had secured a good position in an excellent dramatic company, which would take him from Brooklyn for a few months.

"It will be my first experience as a professional," he concluded, "but I don't in the least doubt but what I shall get along all right."

Conrad Moore was a young man of good social standing, but poor. Therefore, believing the dramatic profession to be the easiest and withal the most profitable way to make his living, he had resolved to become an actor. Hawley already had a reputation in the same profession.

"I am sure I hope you will succeed, but how lonely it will be when you have both gone : for Mr. Hawley intends going away too." And Mrs. Wayne sighed, and looked languidly at the young men.

"Ah, madam, you make us think our society a great blessing. What happiness to be always near you," flatteringly said Moore, gazing at her with an expression of admiration.

Her face beamed with pleasure as she turned to him, but she became somewhat embarrassed when she noticed the surprised and grieved expression of Hawley's face. She knew in an instant that he did not think as highly of her as he had done.

Why is it that a mere expression or a few words will sometimes change our opinion of others. The face retains its expression, the voice remains the same, but somehow, the charm we once found in them has gone—simply because we have caught a glimpse of the inner individualty we dislike. It is almost unjust to become prejudiced against anyone for so small a cause—still, the impression remains. It was thus with Hawley's opinion of Mrs. Wayne. All in a moment, blind as he had been to the fact before, he saw and understood the cause of Dr. Wayne's unhappiness.

Hitherto he had greatly admired her, had even thought that the doctor was unnecessarily cold to her at times, but he now began to realize that the heart of this woman, who dazzled everyone with her beauty and charming manner, craved the admiration of a multitude and cared less for her husband's opinion than she did that of a stranger.

Bitter indeed was this discovery, for no matter how little we may think of people, we never like to find out that they are worse than we knew them to be, unless indeed they are our enemies or we are envious.

The frivolous conversation that followed between Mrs. Wayne and Moore, made Hawley so disappointed in regard to the former and so disgusted with the latter, that he very soon arose to take his leave. Moore did likewise.

When the two young men were in the street, they walked on some time in silence, then Moore spoke remarking upon the beauty of the night—for the storm had ceased, and the moon as it rose pale and luminous above the house-tops opposite, shone through fleecy white clouds, much in the manner that a bright eye might gleam through a gauzy veil.

"The night be hanged!" savagely replied Hawley. "I tell you, Moore, it's an outrage the way things are going on at the doctor's. By jove, if I were in his place things should be different!"

"How *very* honorable you are getting," sneered Moore.

Hawley replied:

"If you were as honorable, you would cease visiting there."

"Indeed? And how about yourself, my friend?"

"There is quite a difference between us in this case, Moore. It is true that I admire Mrs. Wayne, but I do not go there to make love to her. She is my friend's wife!" indignantly replied the young man.

"Well, I know Wayne hates me, but nevertheless, I don't mean to discontinue visiting a person who is always glad to see

me, and whom it gives me pleasure to see. Do you understand that?"

"Yes, I think I do," Hawley answered, with a contemptuous glance at Moore, which only brought a smile to his face.

And thus they parted.

CHAPTER III.

A LITTLE COMFORTER.

NUMBER—Willow Street, the address that Louis Bonnard had given Dr. Wayne, was a two story and basement frame house, painted white with green shutters, standing about twenty feet back from the iron railing which separated the grass plot from the pavement: and when, the following morning, Dr. Wayne had alighted from his carriage and walked up the general path leading to the house, he saw a plate on the door inscribed:

"Professor Bonnard & Son,
Instructors in
Physical Culture."

Soon after he had rang the bell, the door was opened by a young lady who resembled Louis Bonnard so much, that the doctor concluded she was his sister. And he was right. He looked at her with unusual interest—partly, because she was the girl Edward Hawley loved, and partly, too, because her face was singularly striking. It was serious, cultured, and brightly intellectual. Wayne was so favorably impressed, that he found it a very easy matter to admit that Edward's choice was decidedly good.

"You are Dr. Wayne," she quietly said—and as he replied in the affirmative, she led the way to her father's room.

The apartment was warm, but filled with sweet, fresh air,

and the sun shining through the faded orange curtains flooded it with a golden light. The patient lay in bed asleep when his daughter and Dr. Wayne entered the room. He was a handsome man of about sixty, of whom his son was the living counterpart, excepting that the professor had thick, snow-white locks, while Louis's hair was jet black.

Dr. Wayne conversed in a low tone with Miss Bonnard for some moments, then asked to be shown the medicine prescribed. Having examined it, Wayne felt his patient's pulse; the touch of his hand awakened the sick man, who stared at him with a surprised and somewhat bewildered look, whereupon the doctor smiled reassuringly.

"Do not be frightened, father," came the gentle voice of his daughter, as she laid her delicately-moulded hand on his forehead. "This gentleman is Dr. Wayne."

Somehow, Wayne greatly envied his patient as he saw the young girl leaning over him—a sad, sweet smile lighting up her face.

"My dear sir," said Wayne gently, "how do you feel now?"

The heavy eyelids of the sick man closed again as though it cost him an effort to keep them open, but in a few moments he falteringly said:

"That fall will be my death."

"Yes, he fell while performing," explained Miss Bonnard, tremulously.

The tone of settled conviction in which the patient had spoken awoke profound sympathy in Dr. Wayne's breast. After a few moments he said:

"Do not be discouraged, my dear sir. Remember, hope means life."

"Ah, I wish I *could* hope," the old man brokenly responded. "If but for Agnes's sake! My little Agnes!" he whispered huskily, patting his daughter's cheek tenderly, "My little comforter!"

A pang shot through Wayne's heart. This man was poor and aged, and he, himself, was young and wealthy, yet *he* had no "comforter."

The moisture in the doctor's eyes almost prevented him seeing what he wrote as he prescribed. Then, bowing gravely, he silently withdrew from the room, followed by Agnes.

"Doctor," she said, laying her hand on his arm with a nervous tremor, "tell me the truth. Will my father recover?"

"He is very, very ill, but I hope and trust he will."

This was said with an averted look.

She gazed searchingly at him for an instant with tear-dimmed eyes.

"Tell me the truth," she pleaded.

"Well then, my poor little girl," he sadly answered, laying his hand on her head and speaking as though he addressed a child, "since you really insist knowing the truth, I admit—he is beyond hope."

Agnes's face grew colorless, a dazed look came into her eyes, and a sudden faintness almost overpowered her.

"Steady, steady, my child! there, don't give way so!" cried the doctor grasping her arm.

His voice recalled the young woman to her senses, but the pallor did not leave her face.

"How long?" she asked, passing her hand nervously over her forehead.

He understood what she wished to be told.

"I am afraid he will not last till midnight."

"So soon?" she gasped, gazing with an awe-stricken expression at the door of the room where her father lay.

"I should not have told you," he said, angry with himself for having been so frank.

"On the contrary, you did right in telling me."

"I am not so sure of that," said Wayne, smiling as he clasped her soft, white hand. "And now," he added, "you

will oblige me greatly if you will promise not to worry, and remember that *His* way is best."

And so saying, Dr. Wayne walked to his carriage with a wild sensation of pleasure throbbing at his heart, such as he had not experienced in years.

* * * * *

Night was drawing nigh. In the faint twilight, Agnes sat watching by her father's dying bed. Her heart beat tumultuously as she gazed into his face, for she feared every moment, that his spirit would leave him. Already she felt the dampness of death on his brow. His breath came in short, hard gasps.

"Agnes," suddenly whispered the old man almost inaudibly as she bent over him.

"Yes, father?"

"Where's Louis!"

"He has gone for the doctor, dear," she replied, soothingly.

"Ah, there was no need; the doctor can do nothing more for me, my child. Don't cry, Aggie, dear!" he agitatedly said, caressing his daughters' face as it drooped against his own, and her hot tears fell on his cheek. "Ah, you don't act like my brave, little comforter to-night, Aggie. Come, dry your tears, my darling, and give me your attention while I speak. Oh, Aggie, Aggie, it's for the last time, dear, and it is so short—so short!"

The dying man's voice was full of agony. It pierced Agnes's heart with grief; but bravely lifting her head, she calmed herself and waited for him to continue. Presently he began:

"Aggie, my daughter, put your head on the pillow beside me, so I can see you, and your arms around my neck. Ah, Heaven, how blessed you have made my life! When I compare you and Louis with the children of others, how happy a man I feel myself! And yet—there is one thing that slightly

mars my peace of mind, my dear, little one ; and that is—the knowledge that I must leave you without knowing what your future will be.”

He paused to regain strength, for the effort almost exhausted him. After giving him a stimulant, Agnes softly interrogated :

“ You refer to my marrying, father ? ”

“ Yes, dear.”

“ Edward loves me, father.”

“ True ; but, Agnes, do you love him ? Don't deceive yourself, child ; don't deliberately close your eyes to the truth, and say you do without due consideration. Edward Hawley is a very good young man, but he is not suited to you.”

“ But, father—father, you do not understand ! ” Agnes interrupted earnestly. “ I love Edward ; indeed I do father.”

“ Now—yes, my pet ; I do not doubt it. I was young myself, and every fair face had its charms and made me fancy myself in love at least twenty times in as many days. But, there is a master passion which makes our lives either a paradise or a perdition. But now, Agnes, we will not discuss that subject, but proceed to one of far more importance.”

“ Yes, father ? ”

“ My daughter,” he continued, “ you have often heard me say that I admire a man or woman who upholds virtue more than anything else in the whole world ; for, child, this quality is often dearly purchased ; there are many fierce temptations to be struggled against, which if they were indulged in might often bring us a mere transitory happiness, but, at the same time, mark well what I say—cost us all that is honorable and pure.”

Long afterwards those words were deeply remembered—remembered with a shudder of pain as she realized the solemnity of their import !

Just then, however, she only listened to them with the sadness that all must feel when they know that a very dear rela-

tive is dying. The words held no meaning to her innocent, young heart; besides, she did not believe it possible that she could ever commit any wrong that she would so bitterly regret.

Ah, what a great blessing it sometimes is, that the future is hidden from us.

A deep silence followed the words, but when he again spoke his voice was calm, and yet full of the sadness of his reflections.

“Aggie,” he began, “you will often miss your ‘poor old father,’ whose chief joy was to comfort you in all your troubles, and bear them for you when he could. So I want you to remember my last words.” Here his eyes seemed to be gazing at a distant object, and he spoke as though in a spirit of prophecy: “They will soothe many a heartache you will suffer in the future. Yes, you will suffer; passionate natures like yours always suffer, and often you will long for death to release your over-burdened heart. But I want you to promise me that you will always do what is right.”

A shudder of superstitious terror rushed through Agnes’s heart as her father ceased speaking, and prevented her from noticing for a moment that his hands had suddenly grown cold and clammy, as she clasped them wildly in her own.

“Aggie,” he entreated, his voice faint and broken now, “I want you to promise that you will always uphold your honor! It is the most scared and beautiful crown to wear! Promise—my daughter!”

“Oh, father—my father! I will indeed!” she cried with a heart-broken sob.

There was silence for a few minutes, then, with a tender smile, he softly said:

“Kiss me—my sweet comforter!”

In the kiss that she pressed on his whitened lips was expressed all the devotion of her loving heart.

His fingers twitched; his faint breathing ceased in one last,

gasping sigh that released his feeble hold to life. His countenance shone with the grand reflection of the consecrated light and joy of a new and beautiful life. And with a heart almost bursting with grief, Agnes threw herself beside the bed.

Later, when her brother returned with Dr. Wayne, they found her lying on the floor in a high fever, tossing her head from side to side, and pitifully moaning in anguish.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DOCTOR'S INTEREST IN AGNES.

LONG and weary weeks followed Agnes's illness. Weeks of suffering to the poor girl; weeks of anxiety to the friends about her, as they watched the fierce struggle between life and death. All were assiduous in their attentions. Her brother would often leave his pupils to inquire how she was, and Edward Hawley brought a huge bouquet every day of her favorite flowers, and kissed her burning lips in all the wild abandon of his love and sorrow, conjuring her by every endearing name to speak to him, to live for him!

Alas, poor fellow! never again would she be so wholly his, as when his kisses fell unheeded on her lips, and her eyes failed to recognize him!

Upon Dr. Wayne and Edward Hawley's mother devolved the principal work; the doctor's skill and advice and Mrs. Hawley's careful nursing.

Never had Dr. Wayne shown so profound an interest in any of his patients as in Agnes's case. He called at the house three or four times a day when often it was unnecessary; remained all night at times when he feared she was worse than usual; and all this kindness he said was due to his friendship for Hawley and Louis Bonnard. But a keener observer than either of these sorrow-stricken friends would have seen that his face had grown pale in his dread of how her illness might end,

that his hand trembled when he touched her, and that he looked at her indeed, as though she were the very light of his life.

But there came an end at last to all the anxious doubts in regard to her illness. One night, in the stillness of the small hours, Agnes awoke to a realization of her surroundings; awoke, to find Dr. Wayne sitting by her bedside fast asleep, looking much paler than when she remembered last seeing him. She stretched out one thin, white hand and timidly pulled his coat sleeve.

He started up; hastily rubbed his eyes, then saw her with a sweet, gentle smile just dawning on her lips as their eyes met; he caught the fluttering little hand in his and held it fast, and then a prayer of gratefulness wrung from his very soul, passed his lips:

"I thank God, little Aggie—you will get well!"

"I have been very ill, haven't I?" she asked, holding up her arms and examining them.

"Very, very ill. So ill that we thought we were going to lose you."

She did not speak again; but it was evident that her thoughts were wandering to sad remembrances, for her eyes filled with tears.

"Come, dear child," said Wayne tenderly, raising her head, "drink this; it will give you rest, and to-morrow you will be stronger."

He held a sleeping potion to her lips.

No one saw how, when she had fallen asleep, Wayne pressed his lips passionately to her hands. A little later he passed from the room.

Louis Bonnard and Edward Hawley were anxiously awaiting his appearance in the parlor. Both arose as the doctor entered the room; their white, haggard faces told far more plainly than words of the heart-aching anxiety they had suffered.

"All is well ; she is sleeping quietly," was the joyous assurance Dr. Wayne had given in answer to their appealing looks.

How they grasped his hands at that moment ! how they clung to him, proclaiming that no one else could ever have effected so miraculous a result !

They were very happy that night in a grave, quiet way ; and, when Dr. Wayne finally took his leave, Louis and Edward, for the first time during all the weary, anxious weeks of Agnes's illness, enjoyed the sleep of happy contentment.

Dr. Wayne strolled leisurely along the deserted streets in the direction of his home ; the echo of his footsteps was a pleasant accompaniment to his solitude, and roused a pleasant train of thought.

"Yes," he soliloquized, "I shall feel myself amply rewarded indeed, if, some day I may call her, *my* little comforter ! Strange, that I should have taken such a liking to the child. But how could I resist the sweet spell of that honest, gentle face, and still gentler heart. God bless her ! She is a pearl amongst women, and Edward Hawley ought to be the happiest man in the city." And then his tortured heart cried out : "My God ! how happy I might have been with a wife like Agnes !"

Surely there is no time so full of anguish, as when the heart cries out in a vain longing for the "might have been." For a man or woman to look back through a long vista of years with cherished remembrances of a dead husband or wife, believing that were their dead alive they would be happier, is certainly a sad regret ; but to discover, as Wayne had done that his wife was unworthy, and that another woman commanded his deepest admiration and respect is sadder still.

Sometimes we read of a man forgiving all the harshness and disloyalty of a wife, and taking her to his heart again. This happens every day, but never when a man has learned to love some other woman, worthy of his affection, and who reciprocates it. No ; though the wife were to weep tears of blood in

her repentance, never can she hope to fill the old place. Once love is gone, under such circumstances, it is gone forever!

The doctor had observed in the girl's room a few days previously, a number of books which he thought it impossible Agnes would read. They were books of information—medical and scientific works, history and fiction. When next he saw Louis, he questioned him as to whether such was the class of reading she was interested in.

“No,” was the reply given with a peculiar smile, “at least, not at first. But it had always been the desire of my father that he should be her instructor in regard to her education. He believed in educating her for a struggle with the world; for, as he often said, ‘if young women were brought up with a knowledge of what they will have to contend with, the world would be richer, nobler, and more beautiful.’ The result of his belief is, that my sister has read and understood books which many a person older, and of far greater experience had never thought of reading. But, notwithstanding the fact that reading works of information, and understanding what she read, has given her a keener insight into human nature, it has certainly made her a woman long before she ought to have been one.”

“I think you are wrong in so judging,” Dr. Wayne had returned with considerable animation. “I dare say your sister appreciates what she has learned far more than you give her credit for.”

“Oh, she always appreciated whatever my father told her. He was her idol.”

“How much better the world would indeed be, were there more like her—instead of the young women who seem to have no other object in life but to appear well before their friends,” argued the doctor, with a sigh.

How brightly the stars shone in the clear, deep blue of the sky! How, even the branches of the trees he passed waved gently in the breeze as though they wished to express their

good wishes. At least, so it seemed to him. He was so wrapped in thought, that not until he stood in front of his home, was he aware that the house was ablaze with light. He sighed profoundly, but somehow, the pain that used to rankle in his heart at such a sight, did not trouble him now ; he felt indeed, as though it were impossible for anything to ever annoy him again, as long as he had Agnes to occupy his thoughts.

As noiselessly as possible, he opened the door with his latch-key ; his idea was to escape to his own apartments unobserved by the company his wife had invited ; but unfortunately the parlor door happened to be open when he entered the hall. Knowing it would be impossible to pass without being seen, Wayne stood watching the gay assemblage a few minutes. The men were all either handsome or brilliant, the women, young and fair. Mrs. Wayne was resplendent in a gown of rich, black velvet. She was relating how she had been saved from death one time when in danger of drowning, by the bravery of an unknown stranger who rescued her at the peril of his life. " Ah," she concluded with a sigh, " he had such beautiful dark eyes ! "

And nearly all the men sighed too, and wished that it had been their luck to be the possessor of those " beautiful dark eyes." As for the women, when they thought they were unobserved, how their eyes flashed with jealous rage.

Dr. Wayne noticed all this from where he stood, and he smiled wearily. But, strangely enough, his heart did not burn with the wild jealousy that used to torture him when he saw his wife the centre of an admiring group. He was thinking that there was not one man in that room worthy of a liking such as he felt for Louis Bonnard ; not one woman there as gentle, as noble, as intellectual as Agnes !

That night Dr. Wayne displayed himself as a very brilliant conversationalist. This was unusual, and caused much surprise on the part of his guests. Even Mrs. Wayne noticed it,

and her capricious heart was annoyed ; for not once, although she flirted outrageously, did the old look of jealousy come into his face. Instead, the more she tried to arouse his suspicion, the more he seemed to wax gay. His laugh was the merriest and the one oftenest heard ; and he talked continuously on the most amusing and interesting subjects, much to the enjoyment of his listeners. And when finally the visitors left, Mrs. Wayne thought :

“I wonder what has come over the doctor? I never saw him look as he did to-night. With his eyes sparkling and his cheeks flushed, he was actually the handsomest man in the room.”

And Dr. Wayne? He felt as though the whole course of his life had changed, as indeed it had. The cold and dismal path he had believed he must always tread, had suddenly become warm, bright and glowing, and had thrilled his whole being with ardor and happiness at the change. Yes, although all the rest of the world might look coldly on him, at least two noble creatures would generously give him their affection !

Ah, wondrous, wondrous indeed, is the change that affection will bring to a suffering, hunger-loving heart ! It inspires us with nobler thoughts ; our souls open again to the grandeur of His glory and goodness, and we are comforted.

When Dr. Wayne retired to his apartment, he seated himself at the window of the room, and gazed out into the stillness of the night. From where he sat, he could no longer see the moon—which was high in the heavens when he had come home—but a trail of white clouds, looking like foamy waves, extended across the sky, and was finally lost to sight in the blackness of other clouds.

“Dear little Agnes !” he mused ; “Oh, sweet comforter ! rightly named, your vision rises before me in all its gentleness—the slight figure, so quaker-like in its primness—the high, broad, intelligent brow, with the long, thick hair drawn smoothly away—the eyes, large and dark, that look so hon-

estly at one—the small, but full lips that when parted in a smile send forth the breath of heaven in its sweetness and seriousness. . . . My little guardian-angel, my comforter, my sister ! God bless and keep her for all time ! ”

And with that fervent prayer on his lips, Dr. Wayne retired, only to live over in dreams his wakeful thoughts.

CHAPTER V.

THE WOMAN HATER.

THE following morning when Agnes awoke, the blue and white curtains in her apartment were drawn to exclude the bright sunlight.

As no one was present, her eyes wandered over the objects in the room with a listless interest, which gradually deepened into a pleasanter train of thought. The walls were covered with a pretty paper of white background interlaced with a pattern of forget-me-nots and pink rosebuds. The mantel-piece, doors, and woodwork were painted white. The plain furniture was also painted white, but had numerous cushions in blue, light and dark, embroidered with pink rosebuds, that lent an ease and beauty to it that was very effective. The dark blue carpet had bunches of forget-me-nots scattered over it, and a long mirror with a white frame reflected herself lying on the glittering brass bedstead with its snowy sheets and pillows, looking pale and thin, and very unlike the Agnes of two months ago.

She looked pensively at the reflection, but finally her gaze wandered to a little stand in a corner of the room, where a lovely bouquet sent forth a delicious fragrance. It is wonderful what pleasure the sight of flowers will impart to some natures. Agnes could scarcely resist the temptation of testing her strength by getting up to reach and bury her face in them ; but as she was too weak, she contented herself with feasting

her eyes and thinking of the one she knew had brought them.

“Dear Edward!” she thought, “how very kind of him to bring me those beautiful flowers.”

Suddenly, the door of the room opened, and as Agnes turned to see who was there, a tall, thin-looking woman entered and came to the bedside. For a few seconds she stood gazing at the invalid without speaking or betraying by any expression that she realized the girl had regained her senses. Agnes broke the silence.

“Mrs. Hawley,” she softly said, extending her hand.

Had her life depended on it, the girl could not have uttered one word of endearment when speaking to this woman, and it was scarcely to be wondered at, for the world would find it hard indeed to present a more coldly forbidding person. Her features were sharply cut; there was cruelty in the expression of the thin lips; coldness in the eagle-like gray eyes. Altogether, it was a tragic face; it could flame with indignation and fiendishness, but rarely with softer, gentler emotions. The gaunt, twitching fingers seemed to be tingling with the desire to inflict torture. The only kind of dress she was known to wear, whether in winter or summer, in the presence of others or in the privacy of her own home, was made of stiff gray cloth, scanty in allowance of goods, which made her tall, thin figure, seem taller and thinner still, and impressed one with the belief that she was a relic of the old witches of former days.

As Agnes extended her hand, Mrs. Hawley calmly felt her pulse, and muttered something about the fever being gone. Not one word of kindly greeting, or expression of happiness over the girl’s narrow escape, did she speak.

This utter lack of feeling wounded Agnes’s sensitive heart and brought the tears to her eyes; but Mrs. Hawley, without seeming to notice, raised the girl with one arm, and placing the pillow with accurate precision on the bed, laid her burden

down again. How Agnes longed to feel herself drawn to the other's breast ; to see the hard face soften. But no ; although painful it was not destined that Mrs. Hawley should love Agnes Bonnard or any other woman.

" You will want something to eat ; I will get you some gruel," she tartly remarked, when she had arranged the coverlet over Agnes. She was moving away when the girl interposed :

" Will you hand me the flowers, please ? "

" You can see them from where you are," she answered with a grim smile that was more exasperating than any angry retort she could have made. Agnes could not help asking :

" Why are you so unkind ? "

" Unkind ! " the old woman indignantly exclaimed. " It is false ! There was never a kinder woman created than I ! Would any other have watched over and attended you as I have done, sacrificing her every comfort, especially when I could have throttled you ! "

She had drawn near the bed, and when she ceased speaking, stood leaning over Agnes with her eyes blazing and her claw-like fingers moving quickly and fiercely as though they craved to put into execution her wild words.

" You hate me, then ? And yet I have never wronged you ; I have tried to win your liking, but you refuse to accept my advances of friendship," Agnes returned sorrowfully.

" Yes," she hissed, " I hate you ! I hate you because you are a woman, and may my deepest curse rest on you and all of your kind ! "

" Oh, hush, hush ! Don't speak in that terrible way. It is wicked ; it is unwomanly ! " Agnes protested.

" Unwomanly ! Then, by God's will, I hope I may be always so if speaking the truth will make me otherwise."

" But you do not understand me ; I meant that you ought not to have such thoughts."

" Enough, girl ! " commanded Mrs. Hawley. " Because

you know nothing of the world, do not infer that I also am ignorant. I tell you *women* are the ones who should be accursed, for on them rests the blame of all the unhappiness of the world. Yes, women! women, every time! Do you think that I could not hold the affections of the man whom I loved did not a woman with a fairer face lure him from me? I tell you I could! Don't look at me in that doubtful way! I was not always old. Once the flash of youth sparkled in my eyes, and my cheeks were rosy; once I knew I had a heart, for I loved! Yes, loved! But now I feel only hatred for all women—as for the men, I pity them!”

“You are unjust—bitterly—unnecessarily unjust. Surely I, whom your son loves, and whose affection I return ought to hold a tender spot in your heart?”

“No,” she sternly returned, “I hate you worse than all; for I feel that you will be—*the curse of his life!*”

Without another word she left the room. As the door closed after her, the grief Agnes felt could no longer be repressed.

For some time no one disturbed her; then there came a hasty tap at the door, and her brother and Edward Hawley entered the room. They caressed her very, very tenderly. *Their* greetings were different to the one she had lately experienced, and brought a smile to her lips as she gazed at them.

“My dear little sister, thank God, you have been spared to us!” Louis had fervently said.

As for Edward, he could only passionately exclaim as he strained her to his heart: “Agnes, my love! my life!”

An hour later, when Louis had gone to attend to his pupils, Hawley drew close to Agnes's bedside. She looked tenderly up at him, waiting the while for him to speak, for she saw he wished to broach some subject.

“My darling,” he began, clasping her hands tenderly, “I cannot describe what torture I experienced while you were battling with death. It seemed almost as though my heart were in your hands and you were rending it to pieces. And do you

know what thought made me suffer most?—Although I loved you better than my own soul, I had not the right to call you by that dearest and most beautiful of all names—wife. But, I am determined that you shall become my wife immediately ; nothing must stand between us.”

“But your mother will not consent to such a proceeding, dear Edward,” said Agnes, a pained flush mantling her cheeks.

“Never mind about my mother’s consent, sweetheart ; for although she is a good mother, her prejudices against women must not stand in the way of my happiness,” he gayly answered.

“Ah, to you perhaps it would not make much difference ; but to me *that* is quite a different affair,” was her sad reply.

“Do you mean that the assistance my mother could give me if she would, is the reason you object ?” he questioned, drawing back from her with a pained expression in his eyes.

She held up her hands with a pleading gesture, that made him more ashamed of himself than any outburst of reproach could possibly have done.

“You might have spared me that taunt, when you know it is untrue,” she huskily said.

“Forgive me ; forgive me !” he entreated.

She lifted both his hands, pressed them to her lips, and then her dark eyes, glowing with tenderest love were lifted to his gaze.

“Well, Agnes ?”

“I love you very dearly, Edward ; but—but—”

“Yes, darling ?”

“I have decided,” she continued, “not to become your wife until your mother has learned to love me. I want her to look upon me as her daughter, not as an obstacle between you.”

“Which is all utter nonsense,” he remonstrated. “My mother will never be brought to see things in their right light.

She has always hated women and always will, so put that idea out of your head, Agnes."

"But, Edward, dear, you don't understand," she gently returned. "Every harsh word from her would strike like a whip-lash—every cold, cruel glance eat like fire into my heart!"

"You are too sensitive, my love."

"Perhaps so, but harshness would kill me, and especially so from one whose love I desired to possess."

"My loving, gentle darling! Well, how long must I allow you to try and win mother's love?"

"I know it will be a hard task, but you must grant me at least a year's time," was her reply.

"Impossible! Why that is fifty-two weeks! three hundred and sixty-five days!" he expostulated, with an expression of such utter disappointment, Agnes could not repress laughing.

"You dear, silly, old Edward!" she cried playfully. "You talk as though a year were a lifetime."

Mr. Hawley fumed dreadfully; vowed it was an outrage to expect a fellow to wait three hundred and sixty-five days for a wife. He even went so far as to begin counting how many hours it would be, but as he couldn't manage the multiplication of 365 by 24 quickly enough, he left off, and declared he would marry some other girl in the meantime, and then she would be sorry for having treated him so scurvily; and he concluded pleadingly:

"Come now, Aggie, don't be hard on me—make it six months."

"No, sir; not a day less than a year," she firmly answered. Then added teasingly: "if you don't stop tormenting me, I will make it two years."

This had the effect of causing him to desist. He said she was "a cruel little thing, but he supposed he would have to be satisfied."

“The curse of his life indeed!” thought Agnes. “Ah, Mrs. Hawley, you were wrong in saying that; for how can I be his curse when I love him, and I am to be his wife. No, that is impossible!”

But had “the hater of women” asserted an impossibility? Alas! only time, the most wondrous of all revealers would tell!

CHAPTER VI.

A TERRIBLE DISCOVERY.

A WEEK later, Agnes was strong enough to be about, and with her brother’s assistance managed to walk down-stairs to the sitting-room, where seated in an easy chair by the window, she enjoyed the warm, June sunshine.

What thoughts passed through her mind sometimes when she sat there for long hours without interruption. She lived over again in sad remembrance the death of her beloved father, and determined that as soon as she was well, she would go to his grave, and kiss the cold, white stone that bore his name, and plant sweet flowers; for although he was gone, her heart still clung to her “dear, old father.”

One day, she was listlessly watching some little sparrows on the veranda, when she saw Dr. Wayne’s carriage stop in front of the house. Instantly, a wild, unaccountable thrill of rapture rushed through her heart, when she saw him alight and enter the gate.

Surely there could be no circumstance more desirous to form a deep friendship than the fact that Dr. Wayne had attended Agnes during a serious illness, had saved her indeed, as her brother and Edward had candidly admitted, from certain death; for now, when her health had so far progressed that he was compelled to say it needed only time to make her perfectly well, he still called frequently, although he never remained but

a few minutes ; sometimes only inquiring how Agnes felt, or bringing a book he thought would interest her, and then departing.

And how did Louis Bonnard regard the attentions, Dr. Wayne paid his sister ! By some influence on Dr. Wayne's part, Mr. Bonnard regarded the doctor as his dearest friend, as also did Edward Hawley ; so, quite naturally, no wrong was suspected ; besides, they believed him too honorable to creep into their hearts under the guise of friendship and then play the hypocrite.

But the persons in reality most unsuspecting of wrong were Agnes and Dr. Wayne. True, the doctor knew that were his wife like Agnes he might have been supremely happy ; but, at that time, at least, it never once occurred to him to think of Agnes in any other light than as a sister ; as such he loved her truly ; and this love might have resulted as the most holy lights of both their lives had the doctor been happy with his wife.

As for Agnes, learning from Edward Hawley of his wretched life, her gentle heart yielded forth a world of pity to him, mingled with romantic sentiment because of his being a hunchback. She thought constantly of him, yet so innocent was her nature, that she never dreamed of wrong or of the terrible sorrow which yawned before her unconscious heart.

On this certain day as he came toward her up the gravel path, she could not help but notice that he looked very happy for one whom she knew or believed to be otherwise.

"Perhaps," she ruminated, "I have been pitying him unnecessarily ; perhaps his trouble is all imaginary."

This thought played such havoc with her heart that her greeting was miserably cold when he extended his hand. Where was the firm, warm grasp and kindly smile, she had been wont to give ! He looked at her in amazement. Was it possible that after all he was to be disappointed in regard to her goodness and sincerity ?

"Won't you be seated, sir?" her voice broke in upon his meditations.

He started; and although he seated himself, his searching glance never left her face; for some time she did not lift her eyes, but presently she looked up.

"Is your brother at home?" he casually remarked, scarcely knowing what to say.

"No, sir. He has gone on one of those long strolls, which he takes daily; and for a man who says he will never fall in love those strolls are the most ridiculous of all contradictions."

"Why, how do you make that out?" Wayne asked laughingly, for his good humor was rapidly returning under the influence of her cheerful mood.

"Doctor, did you ever know of a poetical nature that could not love, and love most ardently? Now, Louis *is* poetical, although he won't admit it, and those strolls of his are the very essence of poetry; for who ever knew of a man to go to a park to admire the beauty of the trees, listen to the chirping of birds, and see the hundreds of other beauties there unless he were poetical! Oh, no indeed, I can't be deceived!"

And Agnes tossed her head, and laughed with glee over the opinions she had expressed.

"What a wonderful discerner you are!" exclaimed the doctor smilingly. "Supposing now, you judge me; will you?"

She shook her head gravely, and answered that she did not know him well enough for that.

"I beg that you will not insist on my doing so," she added, with blushing cheeks and downcast eyes.

He looked at her for a few minutes in silence, then took her hand. She smiled.

"You are a puzzle to me," he finally declared, "when I saw you at first to-day, a chill struck my heart, for you were so cold, so unlike the kind, little woman, I had begun to re-

gard as my friend and sister ; and now, with your hand in mine, and that serious, gentle smile on your lips, you are your old self again. Are you angry with me, Miss Agnes, for speaking thus ? ”

“ Angry ? ” she exclaimed in surprise. “ Oh, sir—Dr. Wayne, why should I be angry ? ”

“ Then you will be my little friend ? ”

“ Doctor, you are rich, respected and noble ; and therefore, you are asking a very foolish question of me. You know quite well that there are many people who would be proud to know you even as an acquaintance, leaving all question of friendship aside.”

“ So you think that you ought to be proud to call me your friend ? Ah, Agnes, how coldly you speak, very much like the world in general, which has but little sympathy for our heartaches, but worships the possessors of money or fame. Agnes, into the darkness of every unhappy life there must be some warm, glowing stream of light to keep the sacred heart from withering. When I first saw you, I realized instantly that you would do me good ; one word uttered by your father at that first meeting, has been ringing in my ears ever since. Only one word, yet its meaning is so sweet and good—‘ comforter ! ’ Oh, Agnes, dear Agnes,” he cried, with quivering lips, “ will you let me reveal to you the contents of my heart, and as a sister be my—comforter ? ”

She took the trembling, outstretched hands into her own, drew the sorrowful face to her breast, and then, as a saint might have done, with oh, such gentle pity in her eyes, she lightly pressed her lips to his brow.

“ Yes,” she whispered, and her words fell like sweetest music on his ear, “ I will be your sister and comforter ! ”

For the first time in long years, Dr. Wayne felt contented. What were the tortures of the past to the divineness of the present !

Tenderly, Agnes smoothed back the hair from his burning

brow, and murmured sweet words of consolation—and yet he wept; but his tears were of joy!

When he had at length restrained his emotion, and taken his leave, Agnes fell into a deep reverie. She was greatly alarmed over what had happened, and wondered with much trepidation whether she had done right. Conscience said “yes,” but reason said “no.” In the latter case, why had she been so imprudent as to allow his sorrows to arouse her pity so far as to cause her to forget everything else in her desire to comfort him? But conscience coming forward here asserted that she had done right in comforting him, for some day perhaps she might be in need of sympathy, and then, how grateful she would be if someone would speak kindly to her. Thus she argued.

And Dr. Wayne? From the moment she had clasped his hands in all her sympathy, an astounding discovery had dawned upon his heart. He realized then, and oh, bitter, bitter indeed was the knowledge under the circumstances, that he was wildly, madly in love with her! What would he not have given to have had the right to tell her of his passion, and win her; for yes, although she was herself unconscious of the truth, he knew that he had the power to win her love. Had he not seen her face flush and her eyes brighten at his coming, and needed he better proof than that? But oh, agony, agony! where was the good of it all, when he could never dare to claim her! And, oh, appalling thought! he saw now what he had never seen so plainly before; that on the altar of youth, in his recklessness and folly, he had slain the beauty of his manhood! His passion was more intense than it otherwise would have been, because he knew it must be stifled. She must not even dream that he loved her, nor must anyone else; he must bury his affection in his heart and remember that he already had a mate for his life companion, however stern the knowledge might be. Alas! poor, pitiful, but vain regret!

And then other tormenting reflections came to his mind ; to be acting honorably, he ought to remain away from her forever. But fully developed as were all his moral sentiments, human nature was stronger. Not that he admitted this at once ; no indeed ! At first he determined to hold to his honorable resolutions, and really attempted to do so. For one week he did not see her ; but then came the old, fierce desire to speak to her again, to feel the clasp of her hand, and although he tried hard to restrain these weaknesses, his heart clamored in rebellion, and his resolutions died !

Another objection to his peace of mind was, although he knew he could not claim Agnes, he did not like the idea of somebody else claiming her, even though that someone else was a friend. To have known, however, that she loved him, and would forever remain true to that love, would have contented him. But could he accept such a sacrifice however willing she might be to make it ? No ! a thousand times, no ! What misery it would be in later years, when she found herself alone in the world, having lavished long years of devotion upon him, and receiving nothing in the end for her affection. And an intensified misery would be the knowledge that she might have been surrounded like other women with a loving husband and children.

No ; necessary as her love was to his happiness, never would he so far forget himself as to even hint that her loyalty to Edward Hawley would make him unhappy ; for he knew, that possessing her love, rather than give him pain, she would sacrifice all her future welfare, so generous were her impulses.

As to taking her to his heart, and thrusting aside his wife, such a thought was not to be considered ; it was too detestable. But, although he knew Agnes could be nothing to him, he determined to indulge his weakness in seeing her at least, until she became Mrs. Hawley, and was beyond his reach indeed.

CHAPTER VII.

THE DOCTOR'S DETERMINATION.

ONE morning a few days later, as Louis Bonnard and Agnes had just finished breakfasting, the click of the gate warned them of the approach of a visitor.

A few minutes later, a sharp clang of the door-bell pealed through the house; then they heard the servant walk past the dining-room door on her way up-stairs to open the hall door. Here Agnes, giving way to her curiosity, went out into the hallway and listened to the colloquy going on above.

"Can I see Miss Agnes? Er—is she awake?" stammeringly asked a well-known voice; the voice of Edward Hawley.

Awake indeed! and it after nine o'clock! Did the foolish fellow suppose she slept till noon, Agnes asked herself.

"Yes sir," was the girl's reply, "she's in the dining-room; she and Mr. Bonnard are having their breakfast, sir."

"Oh, in that case, I will go down."

Agnes hastily re-entered the dining-room and waited for Mr. Hawley to make his appearance. They heard him rapidly descending the stairs, humming a merry tune as he came on, then suddenly there was a great crash, and as they rushed out to discover the cause, they saw Hawley sprawling on the floor, having tripped over a mat. He was muttering a tirade of invectives against mats in general, and that one in particular. So comical did he look that Agnes could not refrain laughing merrily at his expense.

"What in the name of common sense brings you here so early, and acting like a lunatic?" sternly demanded Louis though his eyes were sparkling with laughter.

"God bless my soul!" was poor Hawley's answer as he picked himself up, "I thought I had landed in sheol!"

Another peal of laughter from Agnes in which her brother uproariously joined, and even Hawley smiled vaguely; then grasping his hands, they drew him into the dining-room, and demanded an explanation of his early call.

"Ugh! Lord!" he gasped, sinking into a seat and using his handkerchief vigorously to fan himself. "I give you my word, there's nothing like an unexpected tumble to make a man hot; it beats all the Turkish baths in town."

"You are an evidence of that fact; but tell us for gracious sake, why you are here so early," said Agnes with mock impatience.

"Oh, to be sure! to be sure!" Hawley hastily replied, anxious to avoid her quizzing. "Well you see, Agnes, I felt so happy when I heard the news that I couldn't postpone my desire to tell you of it. The only cousin I have, is coming to pay my mother a visit!"

"Indeed?" quite indifferently.

Her lack of interest mortified him.

"I had hoped," said Hawley, in a somewhat constrained manner, "that you would be pleased to hear of it, as Estelle would be a pleasant companion."

"What is she like?" asked Agnes.

Hawley stared at her with a perplexed look; here was a pretty state of things!

"Why, upon my soul," he stammeringly replied, "I don't know myself! I haven't seen her as yet."

"Well, well! that is certainly lucid coming from such a thoughtless fellow as you. But what effect has this news upon your mother?"

"From the way the letter reads, she says she has some hope of making her a woman like herself. Of course, such is her wish, although I can't say that I agree with her," complacently

pursued Hawley. "However, here is the letter; read it and judge for yourselves."

And he handed Louis the epistle.

After glancing over it, Bonnard read aloud:

MY DEAR SISTER :—Although I am well aware of your opinion of women, I am forced to beg as a favor, that you will receive into your home and protection for a few months, my only daughter, Estelle. I am compelled in the meantime to travel around amongst business people, and, as it would be uncomfortable for her to be continually on the move, I make this appeal.

"I do not think she will annoy you much as she is a mere child as yet, in spite of her seventeen years.

"If you will be so kind as to indulge this most earnest wish, please telegraph me a line at once, and oblige,

"Your brother,

"WALTER RICHMOND."

The envelope was post-marked Buffalo. When Louis had finished reading the letter, he pronounced it terse and business-like.

"I should imagine her," he added, "something like Agnes, not quite so grave, perhaps; but innocent and lovable."

"Estelle!" Agnes exclaimed, with a thrill of delight. "What a pretty name; and only seventeen at that. I believe we shall be very good friends."

Edward was charmed to hear these opinions of his cousin, and replied with great, good humor:

"Upon my word, it makes me happy to hear you speak thus. You see, 'tis something new for a fellow who isn't blest with a sister, to think that at last his cravings in that direction are to be almost gratified; so naturally his heart goes out to the being who is to fill that precious place."

"I declare, Mr. Hawley, I'll become jealous if you insist talking that way," said Agnes, with mock asperity.

But Edward said he didn't care so long as she didn't break a certain compact she had made with him; then he suddenly

remembered that he had promised his mother to telegraph her willingness to receive her niece as soon as it might please her to come. Accordingly, he bade Agnes and her brother a "good-morning" and took his leave.

Louis Bonnard watched Edward's receding form from the window, and approaching his sister, said gravely :

"I'm sorry, Agnes, if I pain you ; but I really cannot understand how you can love a man of Edward's type. Are you quite sure that you honestly love him ?"

He placed his hands on her shoulder as he waited for her answer.

She put her arms around his neck, and softly whispered, "yes."

How his hand lingered on her bowed head, ere he unclasped her arms from his neck, and quietly and sadly left the room.

"Ah, well," he reflected very seriously, "it is useless, I suppose, to interfere between them, but I cannot understand how she can yield her heart to such as him. They have no thought whatever in common, but I suppose the attachment is based upon her vanity in having a lover, and this feeling I am afraid will play the mischief with her happiness. But the worst of it all, is, I cannot point out any really bad defects in the fellow's character to turn her against him. Ten chances to one, she wouldn't change if I could."

He ran his fingers thoughtfully through his hair ; but strangely enough, not even a shadow of the knowledge that she *was* changing, crossed his mind.

* * * * *

At the same time Edward Hawley was discussing his cousin with Louis and Agnes Bonnard, Mrs. Wayne sat alone by her sitting-room window, cogitating.

Surely if luxurious comfort and beauty can make one happy, then Mrs. Wayne ought to have been supremely so.

A soft, thick carpet covered the floor ; capacious, softly

cushioned chairs, and tables strewn with volumes of the best prose and poetry ; elegant draperies and rare paintings ; long mirrors and bric-a-brac were there to make it cultured and charming. And Mrs. Wayne herself, in a pale rose cashmere wrapper with old yellow lace at her throat and wrists, looked beautiful beyond description ; yet notwithstanding it all her eyes were sad and wistful.

She sighed as she stretched out her hand toward a little, old-fashioned desk, brass-bound, lying on a table near her. Her hands tremble as she unlocks it. She hesitates a moment before opening it, then with a quick, decided motion throws up the lid. Oh, with what terrible heart-ache she scans the contents exposed. How she glowers over them, her eyes blinded with tears of pain and regret !

She lifted them out at length ; the first was a small package of letters—the second, a tiny pair of baby shoes.

She untied the blue ribbon round the letters, and then, slowly, lingeringly, she read every one ; and as she did so, the face of the writer loomed before her. She could see again, the dark, glowing eyes in the young, noble face ; could hear again his strong voice thrilling with tenderest love as he whispered :

“ In a year, Harriet, my darling, when I am a little further advanced in my profession, I shall come to claim you. Until then be true to me ! ”

Ay, even in his letters, confident of her love, he had written that “ in a year he would claim her,” but alas ! she had been false—false ! She was the wife of another, and the signature to those letters was—Louis Bonnard !

Yes, her vain, selfish heart, which had opened to nobler impulses under the influence of Bonnard’s love, had still been weak enough to sacrifice all for money and position. Had Bonnard been wealthy, she would have been supremely happy ; but, had she married him poor as he was, although she might think otherwise now, she would have made not only herself unhappy, but also Louis. Such natures crave too much. They

are not content with money alone, or the love of the man they worship; they want both, and unfortunately such happiness is allotted to but few.

Instead of making the best of her choice, Mrs. Wayne did just the opposite. She began to hate her husband; her heart continually moaned for that she had lost; naturally enough, no man can continue to love forever where his affection is ignored. There must be a climax to all such conditions, and in this case, it resulted in his return of her hatred!

The child that had worn those tiny shoes, might have been the means of brightening their lives, for the interest of both would at least have been centred in one object. But, alas!—sweet little angel!—barely had she begun to toddle from one laughing parent to the other, than the Shepherd claimed her for His own. When Mrs. Wayne realized that her one gleam of sunshine was gone, her abhorrence of her husband intensified, and she sought forgetfulness in the continuous excitement of society, where she found many devoted admirers of the other sex.

Yet, not once did her heart swerve from the passion she felt for Louis Bonnard; not for one hour did she forget the little angel who might have been her salvation had it lived. She realized more than she had ever done at that moment, when she held those little shoes in her hands, fondly caressing them, of the good her child might have done her. Tears of anguish filled her eyes, and kissing them passionately, she put them in the desk again to hide them from her sight. Over the letters too, she performed the same ceremony; then the key was turned in the lock of the desk, and those sweet, sad emblems of happier days were hidden from her view until the impulse to see them again should seize her.

She now turned her attention to the morning mail. The first letter she opened was from her dressmaker, stating that she would have madame's robes ready for expressage to the country on time. Mrs. Wayne smiled with satisfaction, and

began to fancy the conquests she would make in her elegant new dresses. The sight of a letter addressed in a familiar hand-writing changed the channel of her thoughts. She tore it hastily open, and read :

“DEAR MRS. WAYNE!—Soon, although I would it were sooner, but next week I shall have the pleasure of seeing you once more. Yes, I am coming back to dear, old Brooklyn, for I cannot linger longer away from you—”

The letter was from Conrad Moore.

“Ah,” sighed Mrs. Wayne, when she had read and re-read it, “why couldn’t he have come sooner. In two weeks I shall be in the country, and what good will his coming be then?”

And with a frown on her brow, she continued to think over the provoking circumstance, until the clock on the mantel chiming ten, brought her thoughts back to the present. Half an hour later, she was enjoying her morning walk, with quick, elastic step ; for Mrs. Wayne thoroughly appreciated the good results of a brisk walk, and would not have missed it, rain or shine.

That same day, when she repaired to the dining-room for afternoon tea, she found Dr. Wayne waiting for her, looking very happy. He was actually smiling.

“You appear to be enjoying something,” she remarked, looking sharply at him as they seated themselves at the table, for it was rarely that she found him so pleasant ; usually a frown lowered his eyebrows, or he was moody and silent.

“Yes,” he lightly returned, “I am considerably amused.”

“Indeed?”

“Yes. I met Edward Hawley half an hour since, and the poor fellow appears actually crazed with happiness.”

With newly awakened interest Mrs. Wayne asked what it was about.

“A young lady cousin of his is coming to visit his mother, and from the way he speaks, I believe he expects she will be a regular sister to him. Also, on the day of her arrival, we are

invited to his home to make it pleasant for her. But, I suppose *your* time will be occupied? Anyhow, it will be a very tame affair; only a few of his friends are invited, and it can hardly be enjoyable."

He gave this explanation with marked politeness; but those expressions about it being "too tame an affair for her enjoyment," plainly inferred that he did not desire her to go; thereupon Mrs. Wayne decided that she would go.

"Oh, I think," she said, "I will enjoy such an affair very much. I would not miss seeing Edward greeting his cousin for the world. When does she arrive?"

"This is Wednesday. Edward tells me, a week from to-day she is expected," was the doctor's crestfallen reply. The rest of the meal was eaten in silence.

Dr. Wayne was sadly disappointed. He had thought to spend an afternoon in the society of people he liked, but now, however genial they might all be, he knew he would feel constrained when he saw Agnes and his wife in the same room.

He fancied himself looking at the one, beautiful as a dream, but whose beauty, although it might be ten times greater than it already was, would fail to awaken warmth and love in his heart. While the other, shy and grave, her eyes beaming with intelligence and the sweetness of her gentle disposition, would appeal to his innermost soul, and awaken a wild rebellion against his wife, which could only intensify his longing for Agnes.

Yes, the thought of his wife sickened him now; her beauty was hateful to him, for he saw no soul beneath it; or if any semblance thereto existed, it was only a shallow mockery to him. He began to wonder if he had ever loved her; and this feeling enlarged upon by his imagination, made him actually believe he had been entrapped into marriage under the spell of her loveliness and artifices.

If she were only different; kinder and more grateful, nothing would have changed him; while now, all his highest,

moral sentiments, the pride of his life thus far, were rapidly dwindling away, and he was beginning to think that a woman whom he could love and who would return his affection, ought to be taken to his heart in spite of all obstacles.

Yes, he convinced himself, a man ought not to risk a lifetime's happiness for the mistake of his youth. At least, not a man situated as he was. If anyone was to be dishonored by such an act it would be different—his little child who had died, for instance. He would have suffered the tortures of the damned rather than dishonor should lie on his child's head even by a hair's breadth!

But dishonor would not hurt Mrs. Wayne in this case. She was no wife to him—hers was a heartless, thoughtless, and thankless nature as far as he was concerned. Could she have acted as she did were she otherwise? She had outraged his name, and all he had ever done for her, she accepted as her due, in thankless style; she had ruined the best part of his life thus far, but his future with the help of God, he would map out himself as his heart dictated! Never, never more, should his youthful folly mar the happiness of his manhood and old age! Such was his decision and he considered it a thoroughly just one under the circumstances.

He believed that he had but to win Agnes's love to carry out his intentions, and he thought he had ample proof already of her affection; but, whether, after he had won it she would be strong enough to brave the opinion of the world and fearlessly stand by him, he did not consider. On the contrary, he believed that the all-absorbing, inexpressible love he bore her, would master her weaknesses. He was yet to learn, however, that beneath that gentle, loving surface, was a will as indomitable as his own, but in an entirely different direction; for it had honor, and a deep trust in what God had ordained, as being right to uphold, even with suffering; and never, until her opinions had been crushed could he dare to hope *his* might rule!

CHAPTER VIII.

EDWARD'S DOUBTS SET AT REST.

THE following Tuesday, Edward Hawley, while walking along Fulton Street was accosted by Conrad Moore, who slapped him familiarly on the shoulder, and wanted to know if Hawley's memory was getting weak that he failed to recognize old friends when he met them.

"I did not see you; I am glad to welcome you back to Brooklyn, however. When did you arrive?" politely asked Edward, as he extended his hand; but there was no warmth in his greeting, which fact Moore pretended not to notice.

"Oh, about an hour ago," he replied. "By the way, how is everybody? Mrs. Wayne and the doctor in particular?"

"They are both quite well."

"That's jolly; but how about yourself? I heard you had given up your idea of going on the road this season?"

"Yes; a friend of mine in whom I am deeply interested was seriously ill, and that prevented me."

"A friend? Ah, I understand, my boy; I wish you luck! I'm going to call at the doctor's now, so good-by," and he shook hands with Hawley, smiled again, and was about to start off, when his companion said:

"If you have no other engagement for to-morrow afternoon, come to my house; a young lady cousin of mine is expected to arrive, and I wish to make things pleasant for her. Dr. and Mrs. Wayne are coming, too, so we will have quite a reunion of old friends."

"Thank you, old fellow!" heartily said Moore, and then

added with a quizzing smile: "Will that *friend* in whom you are so much interested be there?"

Edward nodded affirmatively.

"If such be the case, you may certainly expect me; I am anxious to see the young lady who is so dear to you."

They parted then, the best of friends again, for Edward's impressionable heart made him believe Moore to be sincere; and quite naturally he felt elated by it. He now went on his way to Willow Street, whistling a merry air from one of the latest popular operas.

As he was about to enter the gate leading to Agnes's home, he saw Louis just coming out. They met midway between the gate and the house.

"Ah," gaily cried Edward, "off for a walk, Louis?"

"Yes; will you join me? Agnes has gone shopping."

Hawley hesitated, then ventured:

"Perhaps she will return soon?"

"I think not; she only went away about fifteen minutes since."

"Then I shall be glad to join you," said Hawley; and they walked on, Edward keeping up a loquacious conversation, his companion being strangely silent.

When, however, they were seated in Fort Greene Park, Louis surprised his friend, by exclaiming:

"Confound it all!"

"Do I annoy you by talking?" said Edward reddening.

"No, no! you misunderstand me; I meant that certain feelings are annoying me," Bonnard hastily explained.

"What is the matter?"

"I am under the impression that something will occur at your house to-morrow that will affect me."

Edward threw back his head and laughed loudly:

"What!" he cried. "Louis Bonnard superstitious! God bless my soul, but that is a bit singular! I'll tell

you what it is, my boy, I think you will fall in love with Estelle."

"Nonsense!" cried Louis, frowning. "You let your imagination run away with you! Besides, I shall never fall in love."

He stared dreamily, as though looking back into the past. His expression was not lost on his companion who shrewdly remarked:

"Because you are already in love?"

"Good heavens, man, let me alone! You're actually driving me mad!" Bonnard exclaimed, a smouldering fire gleaming in his eyes, and his face flushing and paling alternately.

"No," returned Hawley, as he clasped his friend's hand, "I shall not let you alone. I have discovered the secret of why your life is embittered and I mean to know more. I am happy in my love affair, and I want you to be happy in yours; so come, my boy, tell me all about it, that I may be of service to you."

Bonnard smiled wistfully as he looked into his friend's honest, good-natured face, and his heart had never warmed toward him so much as then; but a sigh escaped his lips as he returned:

"You are a good fellow, but you cannot help me. My love affair is of over ten years' standing."

"Oh, nonsense, Louis, you cannot expect me to believe all that! Why, I have seen you myself paying marked attention to several young ladies, and very recently."

"My dear boy, there's where you are in error. All that is seen must not be taken for granted. That is where people make mistakes. Young ladies cannot have gentlemen pay *marked* attention to them, but their friends at once conclude that they wish to make them their wives. It is unfortunate that such is the case, because as long as it remains so, a man cannot regard a young woman as a friend only, for the world's talk will have it otherwise, and often indeed be the means

of making both parties unhappy by forcing upon them the marriage vows."

Both remained silent for some time when Bonnard had ceased talking, but Edward soon broke the spell.

"But what has that illustration to do with your affair?" he questioned impatiently.

"Nothing but that I wished to make you understand that I was not in love with any of the young ladies to whom I have paid attention. My own affair? You want to hear it? Well, Edward, I placed my heart in a woman's possession ten years ago, and she almost broke it!"

"My poor friend!"

"Yes," went on Bonnard bitterly, gnawing his moustache, "I gave her the dearest love of my heart, and she had promised to be mine, but she was false. I have no more knowledge of where she is now, or what her life may be than you have, for when I went to claim her, I learned that she had left the village to be married. No one seemed to know the name of the gentleman she wedded, but they understood that he was wealthy."

"And you have never seen her since?"

"Never."

"Supposing you should meet her again?"

Louis shook his head sadly and returned: "It is not likely."

Edward became lost in thought. His companion began to sing softly with his eyes fixed dreamily on his hands.

"—half the earth may intervene
Thy place of rest and mine between—
And leagues of land and wastes of waves
May stretch and toss between our——"

"Louis," interrupted Edward, suddenly, "do you know that you are singing a favorite song of Mrs. Wayne's?"

"I wasn't aware that it was her favorite, but I have heard her singing it. She has a wonderful voice."

"Divine; but when did you hear her sing? I thought you had never met her?" questioned Hawley in surprise.

"Nor have I," answered Bonnard; and then he explained how he had happened to hear her, the night he had called to see the doctor about his father. He concluded:

"By the way, Hawley, what does she look like? She has a voice that is strangely familiar to me, so naturally I am quite interested; but don't imagine," he added, as he observed Edward smiling, "that I think Mrs. Wayne and the woman I loved are the same. *That* is utterly impossible, for *she* could never become like Mrs. Wayne."

"You do not wish me to describe her character then?"

"No; simply her appearance. I have heard enough of her character as it is, and I cannot say it is an agreeable subject."

Edward gave a description as near as he could as to what Mrs. Wayne was like.

"Tall, queenly figure; face that had nothing striking in its makeup, but did have the outward materials of a dainty skin, regular features, bright blue eyes, and silky brown hair, to atone for what she lacked in expression. Strange," repeated Bonnard, "*very* strange—even in appearance they correspond as well as in the tone of voice. What is Mrs. Wayne's christian name, Edward?"

"I can't say—I have really never heard it."

And so, although Bonnard was prepared to behold on the morrow a woman who would remind him of his lost love, he did not dream that he was to see her in Mrs. Wayne. Their conversation drifted to other subjects. They wandered about the park, and watched the tennis players; and the sun was sinking redly in the west when they thought of returning home.

Agnes was watering her flowers, and she was so occupied with them, that she failed to see her brother and Edward until the click of the gate fell on her ear. She greeted them with a gentle smile, and bade them come and have tea.

How cheerful and bright the dining-room looked when they entered it, the dying rays of the sun illumining everything with a faint rosy light. How their appetites increased under the influence of what their eyes feasted on when they were seated at the table.

Although it was arranged simply, it looked dainty and elegant, and everything on it was perfectly prepared, for Agnes Bonnard never did anything slipshod in her household duties. Or if by accident her cooking was spoiled, no one but herself ever knew of it.

“Ah, Aggie,” smilingly said her brother, “how good of you to have fried oysters for tea; and how delicious they look. I say, Edward, there’s nothing like excellent eating to put a man in good humor, is there?”

“Nothing,” agreed Edward. “And you had best enjoy while you can the excellence of your sister’s housekeeping, because I mean to rob you of her soon.”

“Agnes,” said Louis, with mock despair, turning to her, “do you mean to desert me?”

“She can’t withdraw her promise,” interrupted Hawley, with a joyous laugh. Agnes blushed, and was silent.

“I suppose I shall have to get a new housekeeper then, since you mean to leave me, Agnes?” said Louis, laughingly.

“It’s a wonder you don’t think of getting married yourself, brother. You’re old enough, goodness knows——”

“Only hear her, Edward! I actually believe the little witch wants to get rid of me. It’s a downright shame! after my fidelity to her ever since her birth, too.”

Agnes laughed merrily.

“One would think by the way you speak, Louis,” she said, “that when a man marries, his wife translates him into a different being. What do you mean?”

“Well, the young women of the present day are such chatter-boxes that constant companionship with them, must drive a man distracted. May heaven protect me from their wiles!”

“Bonnard !” cried Edward. “Upon my soul, I’ll—I’ll—”

He laughingly made a lunge at his friend as though he intended to annihilate him for speaking so lightly of the sex. Agnes interposed :

“Let us leave him to the tender mercies of his future wife—Estelle Richmond.”

“What ! Is it a plan between you, to make me the victim of a child I have never even seen ? Why, supposing she should turn out to be a chatter-box ?”

“It would serve you right,” said Edward, and Agnes laughed banteringly.

Altogether, the meal was an enjoyable one. When they were ready to repair to the sitting-room, however, Louis begged to be excused, saying he had some letters to write.

The sitting-room was almost in complete darkness when Agnes and Edward entered it ; but he begged her not to light the lamp, so together they stood by the window for some time.

Later, Hawley spoke of how happy their married life would be, and conjured up many a tender little fancy. But Agnes’s interest was listless. Indeed she had so very little to say, that Edward finally lapsed into silence.

A curious, puzzled expression was in his eyes as he looked at Agnes, and it gradually deepened into a pained look. When he could no longer bear the thought that had crept into his heart, he said, his voice trembling, but very tender :

“Agnes, can it be that you are changing ? Tell me the truth. It is better that we should understand each other at once. Do not, I implore you, conceal your real feelings from me now, only to blast my fondest hopes later. If you have changed, I will bow to anything you may suggest to make you happy ; for no matter how I may stand in your affections, you are, and always will be, the only woman I can ever love. Tell me, dear one, have you changed ?”

She did not answer for some moments, and Hawley, pale

with dreaded doubts, anxiously waited, with her hand tightly clasped in his own as though he thought he could retain her heart through the influence of his touch.

Unconscious of what her heart dictated, Agnes believed she was still in love with him.

"Dear Edward," she gently said, laying her arms about his neck, "forgive me for causing you even a moment's pain. I never intended it; I love you too dearly for that!"

"And my love for *you* is immortal," he fervently said, gazing with eyes full of mad devotion into her face. "Yes," he continued after a pause, "my love for you will never die, come what may; but I need not fear; you are too generous and noble, my darling, to ever trifle with me."

Agnes assured him her love rather was too great to cause her to even risk losing his affection under any circumstances.

"God grant you may always think that, dearest," he fervently said, "for, if ever you become false, you will make my life a curse to me!"

Thus ended their first misunderstanding, but looking back in the darkness of later days, how earnestly she wished it had ended differently.

It was late when Hawley arose to leave.

Agnes went with him to the gate, and there they lingered, looking up and down the dark, deserted street, whispering loving words and holding each other's hands.

When they had come from the house, they had not noticed a rather short, thick-set man, who was about to pass, suddenly stop as though he were surprised or annoyed to see them, and who then hid in the shadow of a tree near by.

Every loving glance, every passionate hand-clasp the man saw, caused his face to grow whiter; still he stood there unable seemingly to resist watching them.

But, when Hawley had finally gone, and he had seen Agnes return to the house, he came forth from his hiding-place staggering like a drunken man with his hand pressed to his heart.

“ Oh, God ! ” he muttered in agony. “ Blind, conceited fool to imagine she loved me ! ”

And as he was passing the house, the light of a lamp she had just lit, streaming from her chamber window, fell upon his face, and revealed—Dr. Wayne.

CHAPTER IX.

AT MRS. HAWLEY'S.

ALTHOUGH Mrs. Hawley expected her niece and her son's friends, she had made but very little preparation for their enjoyment and comfort ; but then she was a woman who didn't believe in exerting herself too much for the benefit of people she thought disliked her. True, she had prepared a room for her niece's occupancy ; her parlor was as clean as hands could make it, but then for a woman who was known to be wealthy it was furnished very poorly. The carpet was so worn, its design could scarcely be seen ; the furniture was upholstered with black-hair cloth, and looked gloomy ; the portraits of some old generals in their gilt frames were uninteresting, indeed, not a solitary cheerful object, not even a book was there to give a brightness to its dismal aspect. It was all as dark and miserable as though a funeral service were to be read.

This room was rarely occupied by any one but herself ; Edward preferred his own chamber, which although plainly furnished, was exceedingly pleasant in comparison. Often, he had tried to persuade his mother to furnish their home with more elegance, but she would reply in her grim, sententious way :

“ When I am dead you can do as you please ; while I live, I shall furnish my home according to my *own* taste.”

And so he had ceased to remonstrate with her, although often on occasions like the present, when he had invited his friends to come and see him, he was mortified at the appearance of things.

But the strangest thing of all was, that the upper part of the house was entirely unoccupied. Everyone thought this an extremely queer proceeding on the part of Mrs. Hawley, whom they knew to be miserly, and none wondered over it more than her own son. The house was a three story and basement brown-stone building, and the two upper floors were never used; why then, Mrs. Hawley did not turn them to account was a mystery, and evidently would remain so. Edward often thought that perhaps she wanted no one to disturb her, and that that was her sole reason for having it empty.

But, if Mrs. Hawley made little preparation for her visitor's entertainment, her son acted otherwise. Unknown to his mother, mysterious packages made their way to his room, and were intrusted to the care of a young girl hired as waitress for the occasion. So Mrs. Hawley was fairly aghast when she saw the wonderful display of viands on her table. Luscious fruit, salads, meat, fish, custards, pies, and cake, and what had not been seen in her house for many a day—rare wines, claret and champagne, which when mingled together in the dainty wine glasses, looked like bubbling blood and stimulated the brains of the drinkers so much, that it seemed as though a hundred magpies had been let loose.

But the day itself? It was hot and sultry. The sun shone hazily through the heated atmosphere, like a piece of polished metal which had been dulled by moisture. Edward was astir unusually early, and went about inspecting everything in all the rooms at least twenty times. Occasionally he would rush out to buy some forgotten article—such as a piece of scented soap, a lady's comb, or some other indispensable article.

As Miss Richmond was expected to come some time between three and five o'clock with her father, none of the guests arrived until three.

When Agnes accompanied by Louis, made her appearance, she was surprised to find so many people there ahead of them. They were all old friends of Edward's with whom he had

played in different companies, and a jolly crowd they were. After she had shaken hands with Mrs. Hawley, who greeted her coldly, Edward led her forward and proudly announced that she was "Miss Bonnard, who shortly would change her present name for that of Mrs. Hawley."

There was a shower of congratulations when he had finished speaking. The ladies kissed Agnes, and wished her joy; the gentlemen professed their happiness in meeting her and complimented her as though she were a queen, then reseated themselves and began to laugh and chat over some comical situations in which they were sometimes placed.

Agnes, who was not at all sure that she liked this sort of thing, and who was thoroughly overwhelmed with these marks of attention, was glad to find herself at last at leisure to choose a seat in a quiet corner, where she sat pale and silent, looking at and listening to the others. Sometimes when her eyes rested on her black dress, she would grow sad, and think that she was doing wrong to be in such gay company so soon after her father's death; but the next moment she would be laughing in pure sympathy with the rest.

The next arrival was Mr. Conrad Moore, and after he had been introduced to all who hadn't known him before, and those proved to be only Louis and Agnes, the conversation went on. Mr. Moore had seated himself near Agnes and her brother, and they were growing quite talkative too. Every time Agnes lifted her eyes to glance round, she found Mrs. Hawley regarding her as though she were watching her every movement. This somewhat dampened Agnes's ardor, and she was again becoming silent, when her interest was reawakened by the appearance of Dr. Wayne, accompanied by a superbly beautiful woman.

Agnes saw them greeted by Mrs. Hawley and Edward. The lady remained talking to Mrs. Hawley a few moments, but Dr. Wayne immediately turned about. He bowed to the ladies

and gentlemen at the other end of the room, and then came toward his old friends.

His face looked haggard and white, Agnes thought, as though he had passed a sleepless night, but he was quite pleasant, though somewhat constrained in his manner toward her. She wondered very much what could be the cause of this, and was anxious and worried; so deeply indeed did her feelings affect her that she failed to notice the sudden, terrible pallor that had overspread her brother's face.

He was closely watching Mrs. Wayne, but not with the inspecting glance one generally bestows on a person one has heard much of but never met. On the contrary, it was a glance of recognition, for in Mrs. Wayne he saw the love of his youth!

He had always thought that were he ever to meet her again, his love for her would boil to a maddening passion which he would be powerless to restrain; but now, although her beauty was intensified a hundred fold since last he had seen her, his heart had never beat so unconcernedly as it did then.

He had often declared it a monstrous shame that Mrs. Wayne was so regardless of her husband's happiness, and this indignation did not diminish when he now saw her. Rather did it increase. Had he met her, knowing she lived happily with her husband, or at least, respected him as he deserved to be respected, his love would have remained the same. But now he was utterly disgusted with the falsity of her character.

In the meantime Edward Hawley began to introduce her; first he conducted her toward the ladies and gentlemen at the upper end of the room, and then toward Bonnard, Agnes, and Moore.

The moment Mrs. Wayne's eyes fell upon Bonnard, she started back, her hand was pressed tremulously to her wildly beating heart! Her face grew pale, her eyes expressed the happiness and pain of this unexpected meeting; but the next moment she had regained her composure—regained it perhaps much sooner than she otherwise would have done, for Bon-

nard's face expressed nothing but calm politeness as he acknowledged the introduction, and she in turn returned it almost coldly.

Edward alone understood the situation, as the reader must be already aware, but he betrayed no evidence whatever of the fact.

Agnes personally, was quite charmed with Mrs. Wayne's manner. She was so beautiful and so pleasant withal, that her impulsive heart very naturally warmed toward her ; but she felt unhappy for Dr. Wayne had very little to say to her, although he laughed and conversed gaily with the others. Agnes almost neglected Edward in watching the doctor. She listened when he spoke and watched him intently when she thought he didn't notice her. But once during her observations, Mrs. Hawley came and stood behind her chair, and stooping, whispered in her ear :

"He's a very interesting man, my dear, isn't he? Far more so than your intended husband, eh?"

"I know not what you mean," said Agnes, flushing with annoyance and anger.

"Oh, no, to be sure not. No, no ; of course you don't."

She leaned so far over the girl that her hot breath fell upon her cheek, and then leering at her malignantly, stole softly away chuckling audibly.

Agnes shivered.

After this she tried hard to occupy her attention otherwise, but her eyes would wander to where Wayne sat, and then were instantly withdrawn when she detected the keen eyes of Mrs. Hawley watching her.

Although Mrs. Wayne longed to speak to Bonnard, she knew not what to say—she was in fact afraid of him. Could this man who sat so silent and cold, be the one who used to be so warm and impetuous? She did not think of the time that had elapsed since he had been her lover, or of changes that may have taken place since then. No thought of another woman

having taken her place in his heart tormented her, she trusted too much in the charms of her own beauty to hold him as she held others. This vanity had often been the means of preventing her from becoming jealous, if she desired to be so with Dr. Wayne, who often paid very marked attention to women whom he found understood him. Had she been alone with Bonnard, she would have spoken of old times, and so gradually warmed his heart again with love for her. She believed she had still the power to effect that object. But as they were not alone, and he chose to be obstinate and unsociable, she would show him that such conduct would have no effect upon her. She thereupon began a lively conversation with Moore, which gradually drifted into low whispers and ardent glances.

Bonnard's love seemed suddenly to have become a myth. For the first time in all those years, he looked searchingly into his heart, and tried to define the real depth of the wild affection he had cherished so long. He thought of some words his father had once said which had become deeply impressed on his memory. At the time they were uttered he had not believed them true, but now he thought differently, and could almost fancy he heard his father gravely repeating them:

“Yes, my son, there is a wide difference between the love of the youth, and the love of the man. Youthful love, unless it is thoroughly gratified in every respect is sure to cause unhappiness. The love of a man is founded on a rock, not a sand-bank.”

Looking into his heart now and judging from these words, he laid bare all its innermost recesses. Yes, this love was the love of a youth, formed under the infatuation of a pretty face, nothing else; there had been no sympathy of intellect or soul between them, or at least not on his part. He had not experienced the love of his manhood yet, and consequently this love had reigned in his heart ever since, only to die when he had learned that its object was unworthy. It was a rude

awakening truly, but now that it had come, he realized what a shallow mockery it all had been.

He was vaguely wondering what kind of a woman he might possibly fall in love with, and he had settled in his mind that she must worship him more than anyone or anything else in the world, when the laughing and talking going on about him, suddenly subsided. A cab had rattled up against the curb and a moment later there alighted from it a tall, thin old gentleman with a good-natured countenance, followed by a small, fairy-like figure, with the most beguiling little face imaginable.

She was attired in a neat gray traveling dress that fitted to perfection, with gloves to match her gown, while on her head rested a tiny hat, the ribbons of which, fluttered with her every movement. The face beneath it was a very child-like one, with clustering curls of fair hair falling about it; the gray eyes were large, bright, and full of roguery, and altogether, Miss Richmond was a very pretty young woman.

She skipped on before her father up the stoop as though she were eager to see the relatives whom she had come to visit. Through the open door of the parlor, the guests could hear Edward open the door, then a noise followed as though some one had lost her balance, and then a very, very musical voice spoke:

"Oh, my goodness! Why did you open the door so suddenly? I was leaning against it, and you caused me to fall——"

"Into my arms," finished Edward, laughing. "You can thank Providence it was no worse, cousin."

"Cousin!" exclaimed the young lady. "You are Edward then? But I might have known it, for you are just like father."

"Eh? what's all this?" cried Mr. Richmond coming up behind her, after dismissing the driver of the cab.

"Father, this young man is cousin Edward——"

"What ! my nephew ?" cried the old gentleman interrupting her. "My dear boy, I am delighted to see you ; delighted, I assure you !" And he grasped Edward's hand in such a tight grip that the young man winced with pain, though he managed to say :

"And I am glad to see *you*, sir ; both of you."

Then, with Estelle clinging to his arm, he led them to the parlor at the door of which Mrs. Hawley stood waiting to greet them.

"My dear sister !" exclaimed Mr. Richmond as he held out his hand.

"You are very welcome, Walter," she returned, and any other man would have been offended at the way she spoke, her voice was so utterly indifferent ; but if her voice was indifferent, her eyes certainly were not when they rested on her niece's face. So keen a glance never was directed at human being before. But, if she had intended to greet her in the same indifferent way she had her brother, no one ever knew for it was never done. On the contrary when she turned toward Estelle that young lady did what no one else had ever ventured to do to Mrs. Hawley ; she threw her arms impulsively around her neck, and imprinted a kiss on those lips that had so often proclaimed her hatred of women. What followed almost took the breath away from those who witnessed it—it was such a surprise. Mrs. Hawley instead of repulsing the girl drew her closer and smiled down into her face. How the sight of this made Agnes's heart ache !

"Dear Auntie, I am so glad to know you," whispered Estelle nestling closer, and laying her head on Mrs. Hawley's breast.

"My dear, I hope you may always say that," returned her aunt in a gratified tone.

For the first time, Mrs. Hawley had been conquered by a woman. Yet it had all been done so quietly and discreetly that she was scarcely conscious of having yielded.

Mrs. Hawley had no intention however of sacrificing her pet passion even in this one instance, but Estelle had completely taken her by storm, and while it annoyed, it also pleased her. After all she was but human, and was as capable of kindness as any one else, but she did not want to yield unless her love was boldly sought. That strange heart of hers capable of an intense hatred was equally capable of great affection. Had Agnes or any other woman been able to forget their dislike and dread of her, and taken her by storm as Estelle had done at a first meeting, she would undoubtedly have been equally submissive and kind.

When Estelle had been introduced to Agnes by Edward, his sharp little cousin at once concluded from the way he spoke that his heart was in her keeping; so naturally enough she became interested, and when, later, they happened to be alone for a short time, she said:

“You are affianced to Edward?”

“Yes,” said Agnes, smiling, “but how did you know that? He didn’t tell you, did he?”

“No, I simply guessed it.”

“Why, do we seem so very much in love?” questioned Agnes blushing.

Estelle laughed.

“Oh, dear, no!” she replied. “I can’t accuse you of appearing so; but Edward! o-oh!”

“Is it really so bad?”

“Worse—much worse,” returned Estelle; and then glancing keenly at Agnes, she asked: “Is Dr. Wayne a relative of yours?”

“No; he is only a friend. But why do you ask? Surely you don’t imagine there is a resemblance between us?”

“No, it isn’t that,” gravely answered her companion, “but it *is* very strange. I can’t understand it.”

“Can’t understand it! What do you mean?”

“Oh, forgive me, please,” said Estelle, grasping her hands

and holding them tightly in her own, "I don't mean any harm; but, Agnes, don't you think it is dangerous for you to have so handsome a man for a friend?"

"Why should it be when I am engaged to Edward?"

The question brought a smile to Estelle's lips.

"Why? Because, dear, he is superior to Edward, and young girls are foolish. I daresay, you think me a little idiot to speak thus, but I have seen so much trouble, the result of friendship between men and women, although to be sure, I have never experienced any, that——"

"I quite understand you," interposed Agnes, haughtily. "But your suspicions in this case have no foundation whatever. Dr. Wayne is simply my friend, and whether he be superior to Edward or not makes no difference, for I love Edward."

"I see you are angry with me," sadly said Estelle. "I know I had no right to speak as I did, but I meant no harm; and I am sorry. Won't you forgive me?"

Although tears of mortification and anger glistened in Agnes's eyes, she pressed the girl's hand warmly.

"And you will be friends with me? Now, do say yes," coaxed Estelle. "Because I want to love you for Edward's sake as well as your own."

Agnes acceded with a glad smile, and Estelle promised to come and see her on the morrow.

Notwithstanding the amusements they had enjoyed, the day had been so very hot that no one was really comfortable, and even the evening brought no relief, for the air remained oppressive. Not a star was visible in the clouded heavens, and in the distance there was from time to time many a flash of lightning. Before nine o'clock all the visitors had left Mrs. Hawley's house, and four of them at least were sad or thoughtful. Mrs. Wayne and Bonnard were the thoughtful ones; Agnes and Dr. Wayne were the sad.

Mrs. Wayne was weaving plans so she might enjoy the

society of Bonnard, and concluded that she would not go to the country, but remain at home and spend her time winning him back. Louis was thinking what a deserving thing it would be to let Mrs. Wayne imagine he was still in love with her, to, in fact, play the part he had done formerly in all sincerity, and later pay her back in her own coin, by repulsing her. As for Dr. Wayne his thoughts were wrapped up in Agnes, he thought of his wild love for her, and the bitter circumstances which prevented him from divulging it. And Agnes herself, poor girl! what wild petitions she uttered as she knelt by her bedside that night. She was scarcely conscious of what she said, letting her heart speak its torturing aches instead of her brain framing them.

Fitful flashes of lightning lit up the darkness of her room, and when it did so, she saw with startling distinctness, the picture of Edward Hawley hanging against the wall opposite her. The sight of it caused her to cower down in her bed as though some uncanny object had been revealed, and shutting her eyes tightly, she did not look again, but went to sleep.

CHAPTER X.

AN EXPLANATION, AND ITS RESULTS.

"WELL, cousin, haven't you a secret to tell me?" said Estelle, joining Edward the following morning in the neglected garden, while her father and Mrs. Hawley were talking over family affairs in the parlor.

Edward glanced up from the book he was reading. His eyes traveled over his cousin's figure, and he saw what looked to him like a pale-blue sky with white clouds. Estelle, in fact, wore a pale-blue gown trimmed with soft white lace. She was exceedingly pretty. Her eyes were sparkling, her cheeks flushed, her curls blowing about her face in the breeze. When

Edward had spent at least two minutes inspecting her, she impatiently said :

—“ Well, have you lost your tongue, or don't you mean to tell me about it ? ”

“ Lord bless my soul ! ” he cried, without heeding her question. “ You look sweet enough to—to— ”

“ Well ? ”

“ You won't be angry I hope ? Well, you look sweet enough to *kiss*. ”

He uttered the last word as though it were the result of an explosion. Then he retreated a few steps to see the effect it had made upon his cousin. She pretended to be very angry, and returned with a toss of her head that made all her curls fairly dance.

“ Well, that's like your impudence, sir ! I'd like to see you or any one else try to kiss *me* ! Just as though my kisses were to be got for nothing ! ”

“ If I thought you wouldn't scream loud enough to arouse the neighbors, and if you wouldn't scratch so as to make a curiosity of me, I might be tempted to take one ? ”

“ Indeed now, but would you ? Well, just you dare ? ”

And rolling up the sleeves of her dress, and doubling her fists, she laughingly motioned him to come on.

“ You dare me, eh ? ” cried Hawley valiantly. “ I'm not afraid ; as a proof thereof—here goes ! ”

And suddenly seizing her in his arms, he attempted to raise her laughing face to his. But Estelle was quite equal to the occasion. Her hands and head were constantly in motion as she tried to escape from him. The noise of their scuffling brought her father and aunt to the window ; Mr. Richmond broke into a loud “ haw, haw ! ” and nudged his sister and said that the sight of them recalled his own youth.

Estelle, having dodged her head under one of Edward's arms, was vainly endeavoring to release herself when she saw her aunt.

"Oh, please, auntie," she pleaded, "do make this horrid boy behave himself."

But Mrs. Hawley said she wouldn't interfere, and that Estelle must fight her own battles. But there was a smile of amusement on her lips nevertheless, as she turned away.

Trembling with the excitement of her struggles to free herself, and at the same time endeavoring to prevent Edward from kissing her, Estelle's strength was rapidly giving out.

"Ah, please let me go, won't you? Ah, there's a dear fellow!" she coaxingly went on.

"I must first have my reward, cousin," was the young man's reply.

"Well, then, for goodness sake, take it and let me go!" she cried, lifting her face of her own accord. When he had teasingly kissed her half a dozen times, he released her.

"You're a bear!" she exclaimed. "You're the meanest fellow I've ever met! I don't like you in the least!"

"Now, cousin, don't say hard things; you know you don't mean them," was Edward's reply, his eyes full of laughter which only aroused her ire the more.

"But I do mean them! Here you've gone and torn my dress, and tumbled my hair, and——"

"And here am I with hands scratched, my collar all twisted out of shape, and perspiring like a bull——"

Unable longer to repress the merriment they felt, both laughed and soon were in the best of humor.

"Well, don't you intend to tell me about Agnes?" said Estelle somewhat later.

"There's nothing to tell, except that we love each other, and I am the happiest man in the world for having won her. Don't you think I ought to be proud, Essie? Won't you congratulate me?"

Estelle was thoughtful and did not answer.

"Don't you like Agnes?" questioned Edward in surprise.

"Like her! yes, indeed I do," warmly replied his cousin.

"She is so gentle and amiable ; indeed, cousin, I do congratulate you if you are quite sure you possess her heart as well as her promise ? "

"Thank you, Essie ; yes, I am quite sure of her love, and the only thing that prevents our marriage is a queer idea Agnes has that she must win mother's love first. Of course it's very foolish, but still she insists trying."

Estelle opened her eyes in astonishment.

"Why, how queer !" she exclaimed. "I don't think I should consider the hatred of a mother-in-law an obstacle to my marriage if I loved a man. But then Agnes is so good and noble."

"Yes, that's it exactly ; so good and noble ! yet my mother cannot appreciate her," sighed the young man regretfully.

"I'm afraid she never will," and Estelle clasped Edward's hand in her deep sympathy for him.

"I'm afraid that of her own accord she certainly will not. But you, Essie, have some influence ; couldn't you try to get her to like Agnes ? "

"Try I certainly shall ; but whether she'll ever give a willing consent to your marriage with Agnes, I doubt very much. I was speaking to her about it this morning, and she flew into such a rage I was actually frightened."

"What did she say ? "

Estelle hesitated ; but Edward impatiently begged her not to consider whether it would give him pain, but speak out at once. Accordingly she said :

"She vowed she never would assist you in any way if you married Agnes ; cut off the allowance you are enjoying, and in fact leave you penniless at her death."

"What !" he cried, with blanched face and trembling voice, "can this be possible ? Would she, my mother, who has always been kind to me, mar my future because of a foolish prejudice against the girl I love ? Oh, it is impossible ! "

"I'm so sorry ; but surely you don't mean to let this affect your feelings toward Agnes?"

"No, cousin, no ; if I did, I should be unworthy of her, and deserve that glance of scorn you cast on me a minute ago. Poor little Agnes ! It is for her sake alone that I should regret the loss of money. I see now that our marriage, instead of coming off within a year, must be delayed longer ; perhaps for two or three years, for I must give her a home as good as the one she now occupies."

Calm as his voice had at first been, it faltered toward the end and he put his hand over his face to hide his emotion. Estelle remained silent, but linking her arm in his she drew him toward the house. When they were in the hall, she laid her hands on his shoulders and said :

"Cousin, I am proud of you for speaking as you did. Agnes, if she loves you will willingly wait until you are able to marry her. But go now and get your coat and hat while I dress, for I want you to take me to see her."

And giving him a bear-like hug, she ran up-stairs to her room, leaving him standing both pleased and confused.

When they were started on their intended visit, Edward made his cousin promise not to tell Agnes about what his mother had said, because he argued :

"If she knew, she would never marry me, and so foolishly ruin the happiness of us both."

Poor fellow ! so confident was he of her love he naturally thought she would be made unhappy too !

That same morning Louis Bonnard received a note written in a dainty, lady-like hand which read :

"Will you grant me an interview ? If so, meet me at 10 o'clock at the De Kalb Avenue and Cumberland Street entrance to Fort Greene, and oblige,

"HARRIET WAYNE."

Bonnard laughed long and heartily when he had read this ; he had not expected it. It seemed incredible that a woman

should humiliate herself so much as to write to a man without knowing whether he would consent to her proposition. But he made his preparations to meet her nevertheless. He attired himself in his best suit of clothes, fussed over the arrangement of his hair and moustache, perfumed his handkerchief, put his diamond ring, that he had not worn since his father's death, on his finger; and finally cane in hand, looking handsome and well dressed, he left the house.

Cool and collected as he invariably was, he still grew somewhat nervous when he drew near the place of meeting. After all this might result seriously! But he did not turn back.

When he came to the entrance of the park, he espied Mrs. Wayne sitting on the nearest bench to the gate. A feeling akin to the old passion rushed through him at the sight of her, and yet, it was not the same, for his senses alone were stirred. Last night she had not awakened one thrill of rapture, but now as she sat there alone expectantly waiting, disclosing nothing in her manner of the voluptuousness so nauseating to him, he saw only her beauty and felt a deep admiration for her.

Their greeting was a strange one. They scarcely knew whether to shake hands or not, and Bonnard was conscious of looking ridiculous as he stood with his hat and cane in one hand, while he said very meekly: "How do you do?" Mrs. Wayne, too, seemed to be at a loss for words, for she merely bowed. Both remained silent for a while then she quietly and sadly remarked:

"We met as strangers last night."

He did not answer; he did not trust himself to speak.

"Is all the past," she went on, looking beseechingly at him, "of no consequence to you now? Have you forgotten that you said once that you loved me? Once! no, a hundred times!"

"Forgotten!" he fiercely returned. "No; I have not! had I done so my life these many years would have been a

thousand times happier ! But you ? What have you, who promised to be my wife, to say for yourself ? ”

“ Oh, don’t speak so harshly,” she entreated. “ Indeed if you knew how I have suffered you would not be so unkind. I am so unhappy ; sometimes I long to go back to the dear old place where we learned to love each other, to live there and dream over how happy I might have been, and forget the misery—”

“ You have yourself created,” he scornfully interrupted. “ Have you no feeling whatever for other people’s sorrows ? Can you bear to see the husband who is so kind and indulgent, suffer through your cruel neglect and selfishness ? Oh, it is inhuman ! Did I not hate you for the wrong you have done myself. I should hate you for your cruelty to him whom I love almost as a brother ! ”

He forgot that he had intended to pretend that he still loved her, but allowed his feelings to get the better of him.

“ Oh, tell me you didn’t mean what you said ! Tell me that you don’t hate me ! ” she piteously cried.

“ You have ruined his life and mine ; how can you expect me to feel otherwise toward you ? ” he returned angrily.

“ But I have ruined my own life as well, and therefore deserve only your pity. If you knew how I struggled against the temptations to be false to you, you would deal more generously with me. Let me place my position before you. A year before I had met you I was visiting an old schoolmate who was ill. The doctor who attended her was wealthy and handsome ; I determined to try and win him ; the result of that decision was, when I went back to attend my school, I had promised to become his wife—”

“ Promised to become his wife ! ” repeated Bonnard interrupting her. “ You never told me of this *then* ; but I understand. You wanted to have the satisfaction of having me declare my love, so that you might boast of it.”

His voice was full of bitter reproach and indignation. She

leaned nearer him, she laid her hand upon his ; but he turned from her, he shook her hand off as though it had been the touch of a viper.

“ Do not wrong me with such a thought, I beg of you,” she huskily said. “ Indeed, I never intended such a thing. Oh, have pity on me ! My punishment has been so terrible—my sin was really small ! ”

“ Small ! ” came wrathfully from Bonnard’s lips. “ Was it nothing to blast my happiness ? ”

“ But you don’t know how I loved you through all these years ; yearned for your love in return,” Mrs. Wayne pleaded with tears in her eyes.

“ God ! is it thus you speak when once you cast me aside as worthless ? Oh, speak not to me of your yearning for *my* love ! I have nothing to give in return but scorn ! ”

“ Listen to me ! only listen while I explain—then judge of me as you will. When I promised to wait for you, God knows I sincerely meant what I said. But as the days went by, and I fancied myself as your wife, I could not help but consider the miserable contrast between being a poor man’s wife, and envied by many were I to marry Dr. Wayne. Hate me for my worldliness if you will ; you cannot hate me worse than I hate myself. But have pity on me for the suffering I have endured ! ”

Bonnard remained silent and she went on :

“ I have never ceased to reproach myself for my miserable folly nor shall I ever do so. Oh, Louis, is the wrong I have done you utterly unpardonable ! Can you never forgive me ? ”

He raised his eyes slowly and looked at her. Yes she was very beautiful and her distress added to her charms. He could not find it in his heart to be harsh, with her tear-dimmed eyes looking so imploringly at him, and her lips quivering.

“ Yes,” he at length gently said, “ I forgive you ! ”

"Can I hope for nothing more?" she faltered.

"Hush!" he commanded sternly. "Do not ask me to love you. You forget that there is a tie; and even were you free I could never trust you again—I can never forget the past, although I do forgive you for what you have done."

They spoke of other things then; and gradually Bonnard pointed out the duty she owed to her husband. How she would be happier were she kinder and more considerate to him.

All this, which she would have deemed an insult coming from anyone else, she listened to from him, and she said she would try to be good if it would please him.

"But," he gravely interrupted, "I don't want you to do it to please *me*, I want you to do it because it is right."

And to satisfy him she said she would do it for that very reason. Then they spoke of themselves. She said that she would be happier now that she knew she could sometimes see him, while he, on his part, said he would be pleased to be her friend at all times.

When they parted, Bonnard thought seriously over their conversation and concluded that he had done something toward making Dr. Wayne's life happier; Mrs. Wayne believed Bonnard still loved her however, but that his honorable feelings prevented him from saying so.

Vain and shallow as the woman was, she was still to be pitied! Truly, the follies of our youth are often the means of cursing our whole existence!

CHAPTER XI.

CHANGED, CHANGED, FOREVER!

AGNES BONNARD reflected long and sadly over the situation in which she now found herself.

Why had she ever met Dr. Wayne? Before he had crossed

her path she had been perfectly happy, while now she felt degraded in her own eyes. In love with a man who was married! She wept with shame at the thought. And why was she in love with him? Estelle had said he was superior to Edward; why? Because he happened to have a good profession, was grave and quiet, and was unhappy; and because he possessed in fact one or two mental qualities which she had admired. Did these things make him superior to one so full of love for her, so good natured, and noble, although to be sure he did act foolishly at times? Was he a better man because he happened to be more intelligent? Was intellect then greater and more precious than a loving heart? No; no! but the two combined was the making of a grand soul; the one to discern, the other to feel, and Dr. Wayne possessed both. She had found in him her ideal of manhood, but he was not hers on whom to lavish the worship of her passionate nature; at least not openly. In secret she might dream over the happiness of having such a companion! Dearly as she thought she had loved Edward Hawley, she had always found something wanting in him—a lack of discernment and indeed many other qualities, all of which she possessed a more intelligent appreciation of herself. She had never admitted to anyone, not even to herself, that she believed she was superior to Edward. She had trampled all such thoughts under foot, had clothed him in fact with all the attributes of a hero. But she had changed since she knew Dr. Wayne; slowly to be sure the knowledge had come, but still she had changed.

Changed, changed forever! There was no power on earth that could make her heart return to its old allegiance—no power strong enough to tear out the new love! Her affection for Edward was gone. Gone! but, oh! saddest of all was the thought that the old love had only just perished, and in its place there already lived a nobler idol!

Yes; but noble as this new idol was, the old affection had been very strong. She had been innocently happy; while

now a world of sadness and misery loomed up in her future. She was not conceited, but she did feel that she, and she alone, was the one woman in all the world capable of making Dr. Wayne happy. He had told her many a time in his grave, quiet way that "she alone soothed and gave him peaceful joy—that she was the only woman who made him feel almost contented with what fate might have in store so long as he retained her for his friend and comforter!"

They were strange words, full of a strange sweetness! But fate had decreed that dearly as they might feel toward each other, they would still be as far apart as though oceans rolled between them.

It was cruel enough to know she never could possess the heart of Dr. Wayne, but to think that she must marry Edward was crueler still. Had Dr. Wayne been unmarried she would have broken with Edward, in the hope that the doctor would love her; but under the circumstances, she believed she could not do anything more generous and honorable than to remain true to Hawley, never letting him know by word or act that she had changed in her heart toward him. Gladly would she have welcomed an obstacle in the way to prevent their marriage. Very earnestly indeed did she wish that! As for herself, of course she would never be happy—that were utterly impossible now!

Having thus concluded, she resolved to cease thinking further on the subject. When in the midst of kneading dough for bread the door-bell rang. What was her surprise and dismay (for her sleeves were rolled up above the elbows, and her hands and arms were covered with flour, while a big, linen apron with a large bib prevented her dress from being soiled) to see, five minutes later standing in the doorway of the kitchen that foolish Edward and his pretty little cousin, all smiles and dimples.

"Ha—ha!" gaily cried Hawley. "We've caught you,

have we? No need to apologize however. Aggie, my dear, I've brought Essie to see you."

"I'm sure I am very glad to see you both," said Agnes, smiling, "although I did not expect you to come so early." And then turning to Edward she said with mock severity: "Why didn't you stay up-stairs instead of bringing your cousin down here?"

Before he had time to answer, Estelle interrupted:

"I am sorry if I have displeased or inconvenienced you, Agnes, but this fellow has been boasting so much of your cooking and housekeeping that I wanted to assure myself that it was really so. I am now satisfied that such is the fact, so therefore don't let us interrupt you, but finish your work."

And having uttered this explanation and apology, Estelle seated herself and proceeded to watch Agnes with admiring eyes.

"Since that is the cause of your early visit," returned Agnes, laughing, "I am glad you came, because I always want to uphold my character as a good cook; I assure you, I am proud to know that I can keep house. The effects of your journey yesterday have quite left you, I see," she went on, observing with admiration the dainty beauty of Estelle's face.

"Oh, yes, I thank you," Estelle replied. "But where is your brother? I hope our coming hasn't frightened him away? Father, you know," she proceeded to explain, "always disappears at the sound of the door-bell, so I thought perhaps your brother may have the same peculiar trait."

"Oh, dear, no," Agnes assured her, "he went away quite early this morning."

"Oh!" said Estelle as though satisfied with Agne's explanation; but some of the brightness left her eyes, and she relapsed suddenly into silence.

Miss Richmond, be it understood, was a young lady who liked to have gentlemen pay her attentions, and Louis Bon-

nard was handsome and entertaining ; consequently she was sorry he was not present.

Like the majority of young ladies, Agnes and Estelle having begun a pleasant chat found it rather a hard matter to end it ; Estelle, who had declared positively when Agnes had asked her to remove her hat, that she and Edward only intended to remain a few minutes and it would be unnecessary to take it off, seemed loath to go as the minutes flitted swiftly by. Perhaps she expected Mr. Bonnard to return every moment, and so lingered with the expectation of seeing him. At length however, as they were having a pleasant time, Agnes declared that if they would remain until after dinner, she, and perhaps her brother too, if he returned, would accompany them to the park. Of course both Edward and his cousin were delighted with this proposition.

While Agnes was setting the table and talking to Edward, and Miss Estelle amusing herself with " Snow-ball " a pretty little kitten which had gained its sobriquet from the whiteness of its fur, the door of the dining-room softly opened, and disclosed Louis standing outside, himself unseen—viewing them with a most amused expression. His amusement indeed was scarcely to be wondered at ; for sitting on the floor, alternately caressing and tormenting the kitten, was Estelle, and every word she spoke came distinctly to his ears.

" Killing it with your caresses, eh, Miss Estelle ? " Bonnard said at last as he quietly walked into the room.

Up jumped the girl confusedly ; the kitten fell from her arms and scudded through the open door like a flash ; Estelle uttered a prolonged " oh-h ! " in her dismay at being caught in such a position by Louis, and pushing back the hair from her burning face and eyes, she looked at him very demurely.

" A perfect child ! " was the young man's mental comment as he shook hands with her. He then turned to Edward and having greeted him and been made acquainted with their in-

tended trip, he readily and with much delight consented to go with them.

When they set out, Louis understanding the glance Edward had bestowed toward his cousin, took his place at her side, and from the time they started until they returned, he was her constant companion. At first he found it rather tiresome talking to her, she seemed so childish; but when she had recovered from her shyness he really marveled at the amount of knowledge stored away in that pretty little head. She told him many amusing stories, gave intelligent opinions on various subjects, and her dancing, laughing eyes so often arrested his attention that he was really bewildered; and though he considered it an abomination in other women, he seemed thoroughly unconscious of her loquacity. He rather liked to hear her sweet, bird-like voice; indeed taken altogether she was a most engaging, loving, little creature.

After this first day in her company, as a matter to be expected, many others followed. Estelle came to see Agnes under a hundred different pretexts, while Louis called quite as often at Mrs. Hawley's. Sometimes he called to take Estelle for a walk, or to spend an hour or two with her at home. Mrs. Hawley treated him graciously at such times, and old Mr. Richmond regarded him with very great favor, and evidently liked to see him in his daughter's society.

Naturally enough Mr. Bonnard was flattered; but he was charmed, too, for he could not resist the spell of seeing a fair young cheek flush, and bright eyes grow brighter at his coming. So gradually when he was alone, he found himself thinking over her gay chatter and dancing eyes, with tender thoughts. He spoke constantly to Agnes of her; and she, understanding and sympathizing with him, always listened and smoothed over the rough edges as they presented themselves. For instance: Louis said that when he thought of marrying he would not dare to seek a wife better off in a worldly sense than himself—as Estelle unfortunately happened to be. Agnes

pointed out to him in her persuading, gentle way, that he, good and honorable, and perfectly capable of supporting a wife in fairly good style, was as fine a type of manhood as any young lady could wish for. He believed her, and so continued paying attentions to Estelle until it was looked upon as settled that she would ultimately become his wife.

Yet there was one drawback.

Although Mrs. Wayne had written many times to Bonnard that at such a time on such a day she would be at home and pleased to see him, he had politely but firmly refused to visit her. But Harriet was not a woman to be thus coolly neglected. She got up a warm friendship with Agnes, and visiting her often she gained her object by seeing Louis frequently. Disregarding Estelle as though she were a child, she exerted every art in her power to fascinate the young man, and actually succeeded in so doing at least while in his presence. Of course he blindly fell into her net, and so attentive was he to her that Mrs. Wayne really believed he still loved her. When she clasped his hand and looked at him with her eyes full of a sweet tenderness, he was thrilled to the very core of his being, and the old passion once more seemed to revive and reassert itself.

Estelle, of course, with the keen eyes of jealousy and love observed all this, and she hated Mrs. Wayne with a deep relentless hatred, sparing herself no pains to show it openly. She suffered deeply too, for that she loved Louis Bonnard was an unquestioned fact, although, poor child ! in her suffering and humiliation she vainly tried to conceal her affection from him.

In Agnes she found a sweet sympathizer ; for Agnes, too, hated Mrs. Wayne now ; her reason was partly because that “beautiful, fascinating fiend,” as Estelle had termed her, was the means of creating discord in the lives of her brother and friend, and partly because Mrs. Wayne was the object that prevented herself from realizing happiness. But Bonnard was not

really in love with Mrs. Wayne, as he firmly declared when Agnes remonstrated with him for his conduct ; but the old desire to have some sort of revenge upon her was strong within him. To pretend he was in love with her was an easy matter, when he had Estelle's sweet, innocent, counter-charms so deeply engraven on his heart, besides it would be an enjoyable revenge to see Mrs. Wayne humiliated as she deserved to be.

As for Harriet herself the promise she had made Bonnard to try and do her duty by her husband, was of course never kept. On the contrary the breach between them had simply widened.

Dr. Wayne kept more to himself now than he had ever done. He had wondered very much at his wife's sudden determination to remain in town, but soon attributed the cause to the coming back of Moore, who was constantly in her society ; yet their friendship was friendship and nothing more, for although all sense of duty and respect for her husband was dead within her, she still craved the satisfaction at least of not letting the world speak contemptuously of her. But on the other hand her affection for Bonnard was so great that she would have sacrificed home, friends, wealth, ay, even her salvation, had he but asked her to fly with him.

Dr. Wayne often visited the little house in Willow Street whose inmates he loved so dearly, but Agnes was rarely alone now, and so he had no chance to speak confidentially to her. His heart was sorrowful and heavy indeed, which told plainly on his face ; and she, who loved him as though he were the very breath of her life, observing all his suffering, suffered in silence with him. She struggled hard against her passion and tried to be true to Edward in thought as well as in deed ; but she struggled against it in vain, for how could she be true when she saw *his* sad face, and her tender heart yearned to comfort him.

“ Yes, you will suffer ; passionate natures like yours always do, and often you will long for death to release your overburdened heart.”

How well remembered were those words ; but he who had spoken them, to whom she had been wont to lay bare every anguished thought she had ever known, always sure of receiving kindly advice and comfort, was no more ! The kind father, friend, and companion was gone, and with him had departed the only sympathizer who had ever understood her ! Gone, gone ! She could only repeat the words with sad yearning, and wish, oh, so fervently, that she were at rest with him !

CHAPTER XII.

GOOD-BY.

The summer passed away and was replaced with the beauties of the Autumn, when,

“All the world is warm and glowing
With the vivid gold and green,
And the mottled brown and crimson
Of the autumn’s regal sheen,
And the air is filled with splendor,
Music lading every breeze,
Caught from rustling gold-edged banners,
Fluttering on the forest trees.

“The hills are robed in softest colors,
Wrapped in filmy, purple mist,
The vales are rosy-hued and golden,
As downy peach by sun’s rays kissed,
Royal robed purple astors
By the wayside sway and nod
With the crimson tufts of sumach
And the flaunting goldenrod.

“All the orchard trees are bending
With their wealth of red and gold,
Giving more abundant fruitage
Than the flowers of spring foretold.”

With the arrival of autumn, work seems to thrive—work that had been suspended in the hot, suffocating days of summer.

We launch now on a new voyage replete with pleasant prospects, which lend new ambition and added strength to our daily tasks.

Edward Hawley began to prepare for a season on the road, actuated by a desire to accumulate sufficient money to marry Agnes. His departure was set for the 28th of October, and on the morning of that day he sought his mother in the parlor. This apartment was so changed that it could barely be recognized as the same room—for Estelle had cajoled her aunt into refurnishing it, so that it was now pleasant and genial with color and warmth. The appearance of the house in a general way also much improved. The grass in the garden had been cut and was smooth as velvet; the vines had been twined on strings and woodwork, the bushes trimmed, so that everything was in perfect harmony and taste. The windows too, were kept open to let in the sunshine and air, and once more the house gave passers-by the impression that it was occupied.

As Edward entered the parlor, his mother, who was sitting by the window busily knitting, glanced up for a moment, but having ascertained who it was, her eyes returned to her work. Notwithstanding this seeming indifference, Edward, with lips compressed, seated himself near her and having cleared his throat with a preparatory “ahem,” to try and make her look up—which he failed to do—said:

“Mother, as you are already aware, I am going away for six months. It is not a very long time, to be sure, but many things might happen meanwhile—you or I might die, for instance.” The last clause came out awkward and timorously.

He paused in an uncertain way and waited for a reply. For some moments Mrs. Hawley did not speak or even raise her

eyes. Her whole attention seemed rivetted on her knitting. Faster and faster the needles flew in and out amongst the meshes of stitches ; then suddenly her hands fell into her lap, and leaning toward him she unconcernedly returned :

“ You, Edward, have lived to be twenty-five ; I to be double that age. In all probability we shall live six or eight or more months longer. But you have something further to say to me if I mistake not,” she continued searchingly. “ What is it ? A question of money ? ”

“ Yes, mother,” was his reply, “ I am your only child, and as such we each owe a duty to the other. If I have been a foolish son, I have certainly not been a bad one ; I have always tried to do what was right. I have followed your advice in most things, often against my own judgment. The only time I have failed to obey you was in regard to Agnes, and then you were manifestly unjust ! I cannot sacrifice my principles of right merely because of your prejudice against women, and especially against Agnes. Forgive me, mother, if I speak too plainly, but I cannot help it ; I cannot give up the girl I love no matter what the outcome may be ! ”

“ Ay,” cried Mrs. Hawley, her eyes blazing vindictively, and her fingers twitching, “ you have need indeed to ask my forgiveness. Oh, the ingratitude of children ! This girl you say is first in your affections ; you think she loves you, but time will prove her to be false ! ”

“ Mother, you are saying this to frighten me because I have offended you ; but I do not believe your words will come true. If I thought Agnes would be false, I should wish I had died before the knowledge came to me.”

His voice trembled ; he buried his face in his hands as he ceased speaking, but no relenting expression came into his mother’s eyes ; she went on with her work as though she were alone in the room. In a few minutes Edward looked up, and speaking quite calmly and seriously, said :

“ When people go away, mother, their friends generally are

kind, they forget any little differences which may have existed, and part as friends. We will soon part, mother, and although the separation may not be for long, I should like to know that I am going away still as dear to you as I have hitherto been. Are you angry with me?"

"Angry?" she said in a strangely softened tone, touching his face with one hand as he leaned nearer her. "Angry! Ah, boy, if you but know how dear you are to me! Angry! no indeed; but disappointed, and terribly."

"Disappointed? Ah, mother, do not speak thus! Do not make me unhappy."

"My poor Edward! A mother's eyes are wise and keen—you may trust her for that. Yes, where the child looks upon the object of its devotion through the blindness of love, the mother discerns by instinct; and *my* instinct, Edward, tells me clearly that Agnes Bonnard does *not* love you."

"Oh, I cannot believe it; I cannot believe it!" the young man almost moaned.

"Well, time will prove that I am right," his mother said with a deep sigh, then quickly added in her old, fierce way: "Marry her if you will; but, as surely as you do, you forfeit all rights to my property at my death, and I will have no more affection for you as long as I live!"

"Your words, mother, are stern and unjust; but though you threatened me with greater loss, I should still be true to what my heart dictates. I see I have made a mistake in speaking on this subject, but I will never refer to it again."

And very quietly and sorrowfully he left the room.

"The foolish boy!" commented his mother as the door closed behind him. "Right well ought he know that I will never deprive him of one cent of what is lawfully and justly his, no matter what he may do; but I only wish I could get him out of that girl's toils. Oh, how I hate her! and no wonder for just such a woman wrecked my life, and *she* will wreck my son's!"

When Edward left his mother's presence, he went straight way to his cousin's room. Estelle was sitting by the window rocking herself and thinking dreamily. She started up as Edward entered, and asked with deep concern:

"Well, cousin, what did she say?"

"Say?" repeated the young man huskily: "That which I knew she *would* say before I even spoke to her. She refuses ever to consent to my marriage; and the penalty, if I disobey her, is the same she told you of several months ago."

"How terribly cruel!" exclaimed Estelle as she pityingly caressed his hands, the tears filling her eyes as she did so.

Soon Edward left her to go and say a last "good-by" to Agnes. When he had gone she locked the door of her room, and seating herself in her rocker, indulged in a fit of hysterical weeping, for the similarity in their love troubles had made her inexpressibly sad and miserable.

The past few months had produced a great change in poor Estelle's appearance. Her cheeks were no longer rosy and she no longer romped about like the happy child she had been, for the uncertainty of Bonnard's attentions was worrying her. True, he did look lovingly at her and say pleasant things, and ask her out to walk and take her to church and places of amusement; but then he was quite as attentive to Mrs. Wayne. Yes, this uncertainty was changing her perceptibly; she was more submissive and womanly now, but she was also sadder.

Agnes, who had been watching for Edward's coming, opened the door as he was about to ring the bell.

She greeted him with a pensive smile, and almost lost sight of the fact that she loved Dr. Wayne in thinking of the coming parting with one whom she esteemed so highly and who loved her so dearly.

"My darling," Edward gently said, when the time drew

near for him to leave. "You will always remain true to me, will you not?"

"Always, always," she assured him as she clung to him, kneeling at his feet, crushed with sorrow. He patted and smoothed her hair, and for some minutes neither of them spoke. Then rising, he lifted her to her feet, and clasped her to his heart—kissing her lips, brow, and hair, sadly, passionately, tenderly, more as though their parting were eternal instead of being the separation of a few months.

"Dearest," he at length said, his voice trembling, "you must try to forget the unhappiness of this parting; think rather of our re-union and of all the joy in store for us."

Her only answer was a burst of tears and a pleading desire that "he would not reason with her." But gradually she grew calmer and listened while he tried to speak cheerfully of the interval between that time and their re-union. He would write her long letters, he said, and tell her all about what he would see and feel and it would seem as though there was only a wall between them, and they were talking to each other.

"And now, dearest," he concluded, "I must indeed leave you. Try and be brave, my poor, little girl; for believe me, this parting is as painful to me as to you."

But though she did not weep again, she clung to him.

A moment later, however, she put his arms aside and bravely smiled. He raised her cold, trembling hands to his lips, murmured a husky "good-by" with tears in his eyes, bestowed a last loving look on her face and slowly, almost noiselessly left the room.

Agnes did not speak; she did not even cry out; she seemed stunned with the poignant anguish of the separation. As a brother and treasured friend she loved him dearly, and as such she regretted parting with him.

"Good-by!" is a word, alas! often spoken—sometimes with inexpressible sadness; little children when about to leave home for school have recourse to it, friends who meet for a

few minutes' conversation, speak it; indeed nearly everyone uses it in parting with someone else, and so it is a common word, often flippantly uttered, so that one forgets to associate any gravity in connection with it. And yet, what a wide range of suffering we are rarely conscious of, often reveals itself ere we meet again the persons to whom we have said this word of pregnant meaning. Sometimes we never meet them. They may have wandered to some distant part of the world, or have gone to that great "unknown beyond," and our thoughts revert to that last "good-by" with many emotions, and happy indeed are they who know that they had spoken the word kindly, or at least, not in an anger! Good-by! the very sight of the word breathes of sad regret and pain.

When thinking in later days of how they had parted, Agnes was glad indeed to know that they had spoken gently and lovingly when saying "good-by."

CHAPTER XIII.

DR. WAYNE DECLARES HIS LOVE.

DECIDEDLY, sorrow was never meant to linger long in young hearts; sunshine and happiness are the natural companions of youth, and though for a time we may suffer the keenest pangs known under the black cloud of sorrow, still our hearts will return again to their old gay habits.

At the end of a few weeks, Agnes was quite reconciled to Edward's departure; every week she received a letter from him full of cheerful advice, descriptions of the life he led, and teeming with his passionate love for her. She cried over them many, many times to think how unworthy she was of his affection, then hid them away with thoughtful tenderness.

One cold, blustery day when the luxury of a bright fire was more pleasant and welcome than the wintry atmosphere, Agnes decided to go to the cemetery and visit her father's grave.

She was feeling very, very sad, and wanted to go there and moan out her misery unseen and unheard. She thought it would do her good, because she felt that she must talk of her trouble—the trouble which had already left its marks upon her. That very day her brother had remarked that “she was not nearly as lively as she used to be; the roses never bloomed in her cheeks any more; and altogether she was becoming as silent and grave as a nun. When next he wrote to Mr. Hawley he would use some strong language and tell him to stop making his sister miserable.”

Agnes had smiled in her gentle way, for she was ever gentle to those about her; but her heart was heavy with sorrow. Yes, she must speak to someone of her passionate, hopeless love for Dr. Wayne, but when she looked around to find a sympathizer, she saw no one that she cared to intrust her secret to. Her brother? Ah, that was out of the question! As for confiding it to Estelle, she could never understand it, and would only consider it “terrible.” But her loving, gentle, kind old father had understood her, even before she had understood herself. Ah, if she only had him back to comfort and advise her! But alas and alas! it was too late!

Oh, suffering heart, to moan and groan over the impossible!

But the desire to be near her father’s resting-place and speak as though he really heard all her heart gave utterance to, brought Agnes some little comfort. So as she preferred solitude, she walked the entire way. The wind tossed her skirts about wildly, and brought a bright color to her cheeks and a sparkle to her eye. It made her look to those few pedestrians who passed her, like a bright bird capable of withstanding the wild gale, for she seemed wholly unconscious of its fury. When she had passed the 9th Avenue and 3rd Street entrance to Prospect Park by about half a block, she suddenly became aware that some man was following and trying to overtake her; but without turning she continued on her way at a more rapid gait. The person behind was not far away as she could tell,

for the dried, withered leaves lay thick upon the ground and his steps caused them to rustle loudly. The man was rapidly gaining on her, and as the road was quite lonely at this point, she concluded that she would slacken her pace ; for to elude him by running would be ridiculous. In a few seconds he had reached her side, and as he was about to pass he glanced at her face, and then stopped exclaiming gladly :

“ Oh, Miss Agnes, is it really you ? ”

“ Dr. Wayne ? ” she faltered, and her hands were clasped tremblingly in his. “ What a fright you gave me, coming upon me so mysteriously. Why didn’t you call ? ”

“ I was uncertain as to whether it was you or not, and did not wish to appear too much interested,” he explained, taking possession of one of her hands and drawing it through his arm.

“ Now, tell me ; where are you going ? ”

“ To the cemetery,” she returned, glancing timidly into his face.

“ Very well,” he said ; “ I’ll go with you, Agnes. I haven’t seen you alone for so long a time, that I cannot miss this chance.”

They walked on in silence for some time ; Dr. Wayne was unusually thoughtful, but Agnes was thrilled with a wild undefinable happiness, which she did not seek to restrain.

“ And so Edward has gone on the road, eh ? ” he at length questioned.

“ Yes,” was her grave reply.

“ And quite naturally you are lonely ? Love-sick, in fact ? ”

“ Oh, no indeed ! Surely I do not look so ? ”

“ Well, no,” he admitted, “ your face is too full of happiness ; your cheeks should be pale, your eyes languid, your step slow——”

“ Oh, come, doctor, do not make me out an invalid, please,” she laughingly interrupted.

“ I am happy to say there are no symptoms whatever of disease in your appearance, Miss Agnes,” he said, trying to

repress a smile. "But, perhaps you are too accomplished an actress, and thus prevent your heart from expressing its emotions. How should I know to the contrary?"

"What do you mean?" Agnes gasped, stopping suddenly in their walk, and regarding him searchingly. She feared for the moment that he suspected she loved him, and of all things she wished to conceal was that fact from him.

He laughed as he replied:

"Why, generally the emotions are expressed in the face; so, as you appear happy I concluded that you either were reconciled to Edward's being away, or else simulated that you were."

"Oh!" she muttered; and having nothing more to say they walked on until they reached the entrance to the cemetery. Here two grave-diggers stood who eyed them curiously as they passed. When out of their hearing Dr. Wayne turned to Agnes and asked:

"Are you not ashamed to be seen walking with me?"

"Ashamed?" she cried, in surprise. "Why, what are you thinking of, doctor?"

"You have not answered my question."

"Ashamed? Why should I be ashamed? Surely I am doing no wrong by being in your company?"

Although he was very grave he could scarce repress a smile.

"No, no, Agnes! you misunderstand. I meant, are you not ashamed to be seen in my company because I am a—a—"

He paused chokingly, for he was so overcome with emotion in regard to what he wished to convey that he could not speak. His eyes sought hers as though he wished she would understand without compelling him to explain.

"Tell me," she softly urged. Her gentle voice gave him courage to speak.

"I have often seen people pass me who bestowed a shunning glance on me, because I am a——"

"Oh, hush! don't say the word," she interrupted clasping

his arm tightly in her pity and love. "And so," she added, "you thought that I think of you in the way other people—people without heart or brain—who know no better than to make sport of those who possess them, regard you? Oh, shame, shame! to give me so little credit as to infer that I am heartless and brainless! Why, the very fact that you are afflicted makes me love you dearer still as my brother and friend, dear doctor."

Her gentle reproach and compassion stirred him as nothing else could have done. He turned to her with dimmed eyes, and said:

"You don't know how you have affected me, little Agnes, with your sweet, womanly tenderness. Somehow you make me view life so differently when I am with you. Everything seems so much brighter, tenderer, and more beautiful, that I forget that there are brainless, heartless people who scoff at me as though—because I am a hunchback—I were branded like Cain. Some men, afflicted as I, turn to God for sympathy and love when humankind denies it them. But I want the love of mortals and why should it be denied me!"

"It is not denied you," Agnes answered.

"No, not from you at least, dear little comforter," he gently returned.

When they stood at her father's grave, Agnes grew solemn and silent. It seemed so strange to her to be standing there with Dr. Wayne, especially when she remembered that she had come there with the purpose of pleading for help to do what was right, that she might be consoled. Her lips quivered, and she turned her head aside to avoid Dr. Wayne's gaze. She noticed in a dreamy sort of way that the sky seemed very high and clear, the leaves on the branches of the tree above her were all withered and dried, and there were very few to what there used to be some time before. Tears which she struggled hard to keep back rolled down her cheeks, and sobs rose thick and chokingly in her throat, Dr. Wayne had been quietly

watching her, but he now stepped close to her ; he put one arm around her waist, and drew her head down on his breast.

“Is your heart still so deeply attached to your father, Agnes, that it is impossible ever to think calmly of the sorrow of your parting ?” he tenderly said. “Can no other affection take the place of his ? Can you not trust me, and look upon me as your friend and confidant, knowing that my dearest wish is to see you happy and that I will do everything in my power to make you so ? Agnes, you have soothed me of many a heartache and I long so earnestly to repay your kindness when you are so much in need of it. My poor little Agnes, speak to me ; tell me you trust me !”

“I do indeed trust you, she answered, looking up into his face and smiling through her tears, while she disengaged herself from his embrace.

“Thank you for that. There was a time, dear,” he proceeded sadly, “when that alone would not have satisfied me ; the time is only a few, short months ago when I had firmly resolved that you must be all the world to me, for I love you, little Agnes.”

He paused, but she did not speak ; she was not surprised at this declaration for she had thought all along, ever since she had discovered that she loved *him*, that he returned her affection, if not as deeply as that she felt for him, at least in some degree.

“Yes, I love you,” he continued, “but I know you do not return it. I know you love Edward, and I hope you will be happy with him. I had never meant to tell you of my love, since I had learned that Edward alone occupied your thoughts ; but you have always been kind and sympathetic, and so I have overcome my resolve to remain silent. I think it is best after all that you should understand how deep an interest I take in you, since we mean to be such good friends. Why don’t you speak to me, Agnes ? If you are angry why don’t you bid me cease talking ?”

She did not speak, but her breathing came fast and short, and she could not look at him.

“Let me look into your eyes. Those pure, honest revelers of the soul cannot conceal your feelings from me whatever your lips may say.” He came nearer to her, he lifted her face up, and caused her eyes to meet his under the influence of his compelling glance, and then he said, his voice thrilling with mad joy: “No, you are not angry with me; but, Agnes, did I not know it is impossible, I could almost swear that you love me!”

“No, no!” she cried falling back from him, a wild expression of pain and shame overspreading her face.

“No? I do not believe it!” he asserted with the air of one who had won a victory. “I would not believe you, dear, no matter what you might say, when your eyes speak the reverse. But, Agnes, why do you want to hide your love from me? Oh, child, if you knew how my heart yearns for your affection, you would pity me!”

He looked very handsome and very miserable as he stood before her, with his head bared to the wind which stirred the hair on his brow. That brow! Ah, how mournful the lines there penned by sorrow’s hand! And she loved him; loved him! and in her love she forgot duty, forgot honor, and her promise to Edward! She twined her arms around his neck, and whispered so low that he could barely catch her words: “I love you dearer than anyone else in the world.”

He clasped her to his breast very tenderly, and she felt herself thrilled to the very core of her heart and soul, as no embrace of Edward’s had ever thrilled her.

“Let me kiss you, Agnes, my dear one; mine to cherish and love for all time! My love—my little comforter!”

“For all time?” she asked, and shook her head sadly. “Oh, doctor, indeed, indeed you must not say that again. It is utterly impossible!”

“Impossible!” he cried. “It is only impossible if you

make it so. But you will not, my darling. Why, I have been starving my heart in trying to restrain my affection for you, and now when I have barely tasted happiness, surely you would not dash the cup of bliss from my lips? No, no, Agnes! you must be all in all to me. I will take you away from here, dear, to some beautiful place where we can be happy together; where peace and contentment shall join us to each other stronger than any tie that man can make, or—sever!”

“But you have a wife,” she said gravely.

“A wife? A wife?” he laughed bitterly as he said the word. “Yes, true enough; I have a wife! No man ever had so lovely a companion; yes, and she loves me so dearly it is the greatest pleasure in the world to her to make my existence as miserable as she can! My wife! ay, truly, I ought to be proud of her!”

“Oh, do not speak so bitterly! It grieves me to know you are so unhappy,” Agnes pityingly said.

“Grieves you, Agnes? Ah, but I don’t want you to grieve for me; I don’t want you to pity me; I want you to love me and make me happy. I want you to be to me what fate intended we should be to each other.”

“But you don’t comprehend how wickedly you speak,” she reasoned, “think of all that I would be compelled to sacrifice for you—home, brother, friends, and above all, I should be breaking a promise given to my father when dying.”

“What promise?” he demanded abruptly.

“I promised him that I would do my duty and uphold my integrity, no matter what the cost.”

“Integrity!” he cried hotly; “I tell you there is no question of sacrificing your integrity in what I ask! Rather are we condemning that which is right by mingling with people who cannot esteem it.”

“Your case is different to mine,” Agnes interposed sadly, “it is harder, I admit; but you reason wrongly nevertheless”

“ You have said that you loved me, Agnes ? ”

“ Yes, and I say it again ; I do love you ! What then ? ”

“ Would you sacrifice all your happiness for the sake of doing right as *you* call it ? Would you rather marry Edward than experience the happiness which I alone have the power to grant you ? Think of what your life would be passed with *him*, then think of what it would be with *me*—for I swear to you, Agnes, by the sacred memory of your dead father, that I will make your life as happy as I can. I will be to you what man never was to woman before ; I would be father, mother, brother and husband to you. I would in fact make your life so very happy, you would never desire other companionship than my own. And there is no dishonor, Agnes, in desiring to be happy when people are situated as you and I. The opinion of the world is not worth considering. Everyone is continually preaching righteousness, but few practice it ; or if they do they are people of cold, materialistic natures, who do not experience suffering as you and I, and others like us. Yes, Agnes, it's a sad mistake to fight against what our hearts demand when no one is to be wronged by doing as we wish to do.”

All the while that he had been talking she had been looking at her father's grave-stone, and now that he had ceased she still looked at it and was silent. Her thoughts were back in the past of a few months ago. Alas ! how fateful had been the stream of her life since then ! It had rushed on carrying in its course sorrow, pain, regret, but little pleasure, and still it would run on and on, never ceasing until she lay cold and silent perhaps in this very grave beside which she now stood. Yes, the stream of her life would run on its course, uprooting no doubt, deeper sorrow, and keener regret and pain, and then it would suddenly end.

End ! and no one would know or care about the bitter heart-aches she had known. This man beside her offered her happiness ; none would ever love her as well as he ; no one would

she ever love so well ! Life without him would be a blank. She would never see anything beautiful in the world again ; nothing, nothing—only the sad sweetness of her sorrow ! Such would be her life were she to act rightly. What a terrible price it seemed, to think that for upholding her integrity she must endure a lifetime of sorrow !—“ A sacred and beautiful crown to wear ? ” Ay, truly ! but there was no happiness in connection with it ! And when she would be lost to the world, lost to friends, lost to him who loved her, in the black, yawning abyss of Death, what would it matter whether she had led a righteous life, or had sacrificed her integrity for happiness ? Gain an eternity of happiness in Heaven ? Ah, but that last breath of air, last beat of the heart which reveals to us the world of shadows, might be far in the distance ; beyond the verge of twenty, thirty, or forty years ! God ! what a prolongation of suffering !

“ Agnes, darling, don’t you agree with me ? ” interrupted Dr. Wayne, peering over her shoulder into her face.

“ Agree with you ? No, no ! I don’t know ! Everything seems so black, and dreary and full of sadness. But I love you—I love you ! ”

And she clung to his breast like a storm-tossed bird seeking refuge, feeling that all the world was against her.

Dr. Wayne believed he had won her consent ; but wisely refrained from speaking to her on the subject just then. The day was fast drawing to a close when Agnes said she must return home ; and so in the gathering twilight which gradually deepened into the blackness of night, they walked home through the gas-lit streets, glancing into windows right and left of them, where they caught glimpses of different homes and the people who occupied them. In one room especially Agnes saw a sad-looking woman about forty seated in front of a bright wood fire, the flames of which every moment threw fitful gleams of light on her face. In one hand she held the portrait of a man on which her eyes were riveted thoughtfully

and sorrowfully. What her story might have been Agnes could not conjecture ; but she shuddered to think that perhaps some day years hence she too, might be seated thus in solitude, dreaming over a picture and thinking of a happiness she might herself have known.

CHAPTER XIV.

AGNES'S STRUGGLE.

DR. WAYNE left Agnes at the door of her home. When parting with her, he took her trembling, cold, little hand, and clasped it warmly and closely within his own.

“ You will always love me ? ” he earnestly whispered.

“ Yes,” she softly returned, looking up into his face and smiling faintly.

He said “ good-night ” and went his way. But Agnes did not go within doors immediately. Long after Dr. Wayne had gone she stood still—lost in dreamy thought. But at last she roused herself, and shaking her head sadly went inside. Entering the parlor, she found her brother sitting before the fire deep in reverie. He started up, however, when she came toward him, and said :

“ Hallo, sis ; where have you been ? ”

He turned to look at her when she did not answer, and saw her lying back in a chair, pale, and trembling, and panting. Without further questioning he went at once to her assistance. After loosening her cloak and removing her hat, he chafed her cold hands until they had regained some warmth, and then, when she had drank a cup of hot tea, he helped her to the sofa, and made her lie down.

Louis Bonnard looked and felt perplexed. It was an unusual thing for his sister to be subject to fainting spells ; consequently he was puzzled ; especially so, as he could not de-

fine any good reason for it. How ghastly white she was to be sure, and what a frightened, pained expression was in her eyes!

Suddenly she looked at him, and then said pointing to the floor in the centre of the room:

"Will you please put those flowers in water, Louis?"

He looked to where she pointed, and noticing that the flowers indicated were the same as those which grew on a large bush in their garden, he said:

"Oh, there's no need to do that; we have plenty more."

"But I want to keep *those*," she insisted earnestly.

Wondering at her odd request, he did as she desired. She watched him the while as though she feared something might happen to them.

Louis did not trouble Agnes with further questions, but drew his own conclusions as to the cause of her faintness. Before leaving the room to retire to her own chamber, she took the glass containing her flowers, and he noticed that her hand lingered caressingly on them.

"So," he thought, when she was gone; "those flowers have some connection with her illness. But it is no use asking her the cause, because if a woman doesn't volunteer to explain, it is useless trying to induce her. I must look into this later."

But, like a great many people, Louis Bonnard's decision to investigate the matter was made on the spur of the moment. The next morning when he saw her, she was as cheerful as usual, so he thought no more of her queer behavior of the night before, than to remark that she evidently had walked too much for such a stormy day.

But in spite of her apparent cheerfulness, Agnes had suffered terribly that night. Until long past midnight she did not sleep, but sat by the window of her bedroom, looking out at the star-lit sky, thinking, thinking—and trying to pierce the dismal prospect that greeted her.

Away from Dr. Wayne, she began to reason differently to

what she had done in the afternoon, and her thoughts were calmer. She summoned up all the advice her father had given in regard to doing right, thought of Edward's love, and what the world would think were she to consent to Dr. Wayne's proposal. She fancied herself living with him, and had she been of a reckless, thoughtless disposition, she would have seen herself happy. But as she was timid, sensitive, and conscientious, she thought everyone would regard her with scorn; and, although *his* love would always be as devoted (she did not in the least doubt that) still, when considering all she would be compelled to contend with for the sake of that love, would it not be best after all to do right? Of course she would never marry Edward now that her affection was so utterly estranged from him—that would be cruel to both him and herself. And besides, had she not promised to be true to—Robert? “Robert!” She repeated the name with sad tenderness and wearily wondered when people loved each other why they could not come together.

She wrote a letter which she intended to give the doctor when she next saw him. She said that their love was a mistake; it could never culminate in the way he had spoken of. She pointed out all it would make her suffer; she would always be true to him inasmuch as she would not marry anyone else, but he must not speak to her of love. Of course she could never be happy again—thoroughly happy—but she would know that she was doing what was right, and she hoped very earnestly that he would always remain her “dear, kind friend.”

She never asked herself whether she would be satisfied with his friendship alone. Indeed, it is rare that a woman questions herself on such a point where a man loves her. She takes it for granted that the love must remain the same. On the contrary a man holds different views in expressing his love and in expressing his friendship. He acts as though the two things were not the same. His love, he shows by a devoted

familiarity ; his friendship causes him to act ever as though he were under restraint, and makes him appear cold in his attentions. Much more is demanded from those we love than from those we regard merely as friends. A woman who regards a man as a friend, might watch him pay attentions to another woman for hours at a time without one pang of jealousy ; but how widely different would be the case if she loved him ! Not all the protestations he could ever make, would make her believe that he had been true to her at the time he was speaking to her rival. Though years intervened and they had married, still she would remind him of the " Mary Jane " to whom he had spoken years before, and perhaps had never seen since, but he would still be at her mercy.

Now, Agnes, who sincerely desired to do what was right, thought that all she would have to do would be to forbid Dr. Wayne to speak to her of love. This she considered doing right. It never occurred however to her that speaking of love and thinking of it is as bad one way as the other, for she did not wish him to cease loving her.

She kept the flowers he had given her in water, until they were quite faded, and then placed them between the leaves of a book to press, thinking as she did so of the familiar lines :

" 'Tis but a little faded flower
But oh, how fondly dear !
'Twill bring me back one golden hour,
Through many, through many a weary year."

Would that those pathetic lines had been heeded ! Would that, instead of praying for happiness, she had begged from the bottom of her heart : " Lead me not into temptation."

* * * * *

" A letter for you, sis," said Louis Bonnard one morning coming into the dining-room, where Agnes was diligently sewing. He threw the letter into her lap and then stood watching her while she opened it. But partly because she knew the letter was from Edward, and partly because her brother was

regarding her narrowly, it grew quite a difficult task for her to tear the envelope apart.

When it was finally opened, she began to read it with the deep interest that only a love letter can rouse in woman's brain.

"What news?" questioned Louis as Agnes looked up at last, with a deep sigh.

"Edward says he is due in Denver, the 8th of December; also, he sends his kindest regards to you."

"Much obliged to him, I'm sure; send him mine, when you answer his letter."

Agnes nodded, and her brother left the room. It was about half an hour later when she was again interrupted—this time by the servant saying:

"There's a gentleman to see you, miss."

"A gentleman to see me!" exclaimed Agnes in surprise.

When she had entered the parlor, she found Dr. Wayne leaning against the mantel, looking into the glowing fire.

"Good-morning, Agnes," he said, approaching her with outstretched hand.

She returned his greeting very quietly, but was so nervous as to forget to even ask him to be seated. She had not seen him since that day when they had been to the cemetery—over a week ago—so naturally this meeting was somewhat embarrassing.

"I am an early caller, am I not? Perhaps you are annoyed with me for coming so unseasonably?" he questioned, surprised at her silence.

"Oh, no," she assured him with her serious smile.

"You see," he explained, "my morning route begins at ten o'clock, so I thought it would be best to call before I started out. I have been wanting to see you so very, very much. . . . Well, Agnes, haven't you anything to say to me?"

He came quite close to her and attempted to take her hands, but she drew away and pleadingly said:

“ Oh, don't touch me ; wait a moment, please, I have something to show you.”

And she darted past him out of the room before he had a chance to detain her. She returned in a few moments and, with a trembling hand, extended him the letter which she had written.

“ Why, what does this mean, Agnes ? ” he gaily asked.

“ Something I wished to tell you ; but I couldn't say it, so I have written it instead,” she returned quietly, but without looking at him.

When he had finished reading the letter, Dr. Wayne stood looking at her as though wondering whether or not it was all a joke ; but he at length said :

“ You are not aware, Agnes, of what all this implies, or you would not have written as you have done—not if you had loved me. Do you know you ask of me what is impossible ! Of course I shall always remain your friend, but I can never bear to see you if you forbid me to speak to you of my love. If you return my affection, Agnes, as I have every reason to believe you do, you know very little of the heart if you think that what you ask can be accomplished thus easily—where two passionate natures cling fondly to each other ! It is the breath of their lives, dear, and all the duty, and honor, and philosophy in the world will not change that craving.”

“ Oh, please, don't try to make me change my resolve,” she pleaded earnestly, as he paused. “ But if you would only be my friend, and let me see you quite as often as in the past, I think we could both be almost contented.”

“ I have thought as you have done, I have made the effort to do what I once thought was right, and I have failed, Agnes. How can you expect me to be continually in your presence without expressing by one solitary caress how I feel toward you ; it would be absolute cruelty to live under such restraint. No, no, Agnes, I cannot accede to such a hopeless request. I cannot cast out the one gleam of sunshine that has brightened

my life. You seem to regard my love for you as though it were the love of mere friendship when you speak so calmly of restraining it. But I tell you that is beyond my power. I love you, and you must either consent to let me love you or I will remain away from you forever. Come, tell me, Agnes, which is it to be?"

"Oh, I cannot consent to never seeing you again," she sobbed.

His arm closed tenderly around her; and she nestled close to him, all thought of honor and duty gone; but her love was burning like a furnace in heart and soul.

"Very soon, my darling, I shall take you away with me," he said, but she did not answer.

From that time she never spoke of duty to him again. Not that she entirely agreed with his idea of being happy in spite of everything; but when the dismal thought came that they would part forever did she hold to doing what she knew was right, then did her heart refuse to let her speak. And thus the days went by, and the struggle between love and integrity grew harder; and the advice her dying father had given was unheeded.

Dr. Wayne had tried to induce Agnes to write to Edward and tell him of her changed feelings toward him; of course omitting to mention himself as connected with it in any way. But she had reasoned that it would be a much easier task to tell him of it when she saw him again. She continued to write to him therefore as though her love was unchanged; and he, poor fellow, never read between the lines of her letters! In the blindness of his own love he trusted her entirely, and when he read the words her hand had traced "I love you!" he thoroughly believed they came from her heart.

But many pangs of remorse stirred her heart when she thought of the hypocritical part she was playing. She felt herself an entirely different person to what she was a few months ago, and oh, what a miserable change it was!

CHAPTER XV.

AGNES'S DREAM.

"AUNTIE, do I look nice?" asked Estelle Richmond one night bursting into the kitchen, where Mrs. Hawley sat before the fire, busily knitting and watching the simmering pots on the stove.

"Look nice?" her aunt repeated, glancing up at her; "why, my dear, you always look nice."

"But do I look especially so to-night?" wistfully asked Estelle.

Mrs. Hawley stared at her sharply, then said:

"Hem! he's coming to-night, I suppose?"

"Who, auntie?"

"Mr. Bonnard of course. There is no other gentleman comes here."

"Mr. Moore comes sometimes. I thought perhaps you meant him," returned her niece with an uplifting of her eyebrows.

Mrs. Hawley made no reply, but arose from her seat, and lifting the covers of the pots on the stove, she shook a dash of pepper into one, and of salt into the other. A few minutes thereafter, she announced to her niece that supper was ready; and they both seated themselves at the table to do it justice.

"Child," said Mrs. Hawley gravely, when they had almost finished their meal, "I don't think you are looking quite as well as when you came here. Is there anything wrong between you and Mr. Bonnard?"

"I—I don't think I quite understand you, aunt," chokingly returned Estelle.

"Nonsense!" fiercely expostulated Mrs. Hawley. "Do you suppose I'm blind or an idiot, not to see that you are in love with Bonnard? Why can't you answer me truthfully? But, ah, the present generation of young women are sadly lacking in truth; everything is pretention and sham now-a-days!"

"Oh, aunt, please don't be angry!"

"Angry!" and the word was spoken by Mrs. Hawley with such deep vehemence that she made her niece start from her seat as though a pin had suddenly run into her. "Is it any wonder I am angry? Here are you keeping company with a young man, and yet you don't know whether he cares about you or not. A fine state of things, truly!"

And the old woman sniffed the air contemptuously.

"But, surely, aunt, you wouldn't have me ask him if he loved me?"

"Have you ask him, you silly girl!" fairly screamed the old lady. "No; but there are a hundred of ways of finding out."

"Tell me how, auntie," eagerly said Estelle.

"Oh, for mercy's sake use your brains!" was the sharp response.

Miss Estelle made no reply; she had fallen into deep thought. Suddenly she jumped up and skipped to Mrs. Hawley's chair; putting her arms around her neck she said very earnestly:

"Aunt, would you approve of my marrying Mr. Bonnard?"

"Good heavens, girl! what makes you ask me that?" cried Mrs. Hawley in astonishment.

"Never mind; but do you approve of him?" persisted Estelle, her eyes fairly dancing.

"Well, yes;" was the reply given promptly; but no sooner had she said it than she felt herself choking with the fierce pressure of that young vixen's arms.

"Oh, you dear, darling auntie!" was said so loud and close to her ear that for half an hour after, Mrs. Hawley heard only the the sound of a wild wind; the next moment Miss Estelle had dashed out of the room to answer a ring of the door-bell.

Once outside the room, she paused pantingly in the hall; but only for a moment however; then she darted to the parlor, turned on the dimly-lit gas, and proceeded to do what ninety-nine women out of a hundred will do when they suspect their visitor to be a man. She stood before the mirror and surveyed herself critically; then, having pulled her sleeves down as far as possible, and placed one or two straggling curls in place, she proceeded to open the house-door.

"Why, Mr. Bonnard, is it you?" she asked, with a pretty pretence of surprise, as that gentleman came under the glare of the hall light.

"Yes, it's me, Essie," he returned with easy familiarity, as he clasped her hand. "Had you forgotten that I told you I would call to-night?"

"I had not forgotten it; but I thought you might not keep your appointment."

She had ushered him into the parlor, and he had seated himself near the fire; she was laying his heavy coat aside while she spoke, so that he did not see her face just then.

"Do you suppose anything could make *me* break an appointment with *you*?" he questioned with much earnestness as she came and stood beside the fire near him.

"Oh, yes," she declared very positively. "I know of one reason, at least."

"What is it?" he smilingly asked.

She hesitated, and said of course it didn't matter much; but Bonnard persisted.

"If Mrs. Wayne," she replied, her voice quivering, "asked you to call on her, you know you would do so."

Bonnard laughed, and declared it was all a mistake; but

he did not explain the cause of his attentions to Mrs. Wayne, beyond remarking that he regarded her only as a friend. Estelle however, seemed to look upon the affair in a different light. She grew grave and sad, and gradually relapsed into silence.

“Not feeling well, Essie?” questioned Louis after a while, very tenderly.

“Yes,” she returned pettishly, “I am quite well, and very—happy.”

And she looked him straight in the eye, and her glance never faltered. Bonnard wisely refrained from replying just then, but a faint smile played round his lips as he watched her. What a little thing she was to be sure, and yet what an amount of will power she possessed. He saw that although she tried to conceal her feelings, she was wounded deeply, and he knew that the attentions he paid Mrs. Wayne was the cause of it. Although he tried to converse with her, he was at last compelled to give up the attempt, for she was quite uninterested. Even his most amusing jokes, failed to bring the ghost of a smile to her face. He was watching her as she sat in a big, easy chair in front of the fire, and thinking what a pretty picture she made! The ruddy fire-light reflected its cheery glow over her; her hands lay limply in her lap: her countenance was pale, grave, and profoundly melancholy. And how unnatural it seemed to behold such an expression on so childlike a face! No, no; that look must not linger there; he would remove it by explaining everything in regard to Mrs. Wayne. He was about to speak when she suddenly looked up and sighed deeply.

“Well, Essie, what is the meaning of that?”

“I was thinking,” she quietly replied, “of a poem I read this afternoon; a very beautiful one.”

“What is the name of it?”

“It is entitled: ‘I would not call thee mine.’”

"That must be very pretty," he laughed. "Do let me see it, Essie."

When her back was turned to him, while she was getting the volume containing the poem, she smiled with deep satisfaction; but her face was just as pensive when she came toward him as when he had seen it last. Her fingers trembled somewhat though as she turned over the pages until she found the place she sought. Then she handed the book to him. She stood close beside him looking at the book too, while he read aloud;

"Farewell! thy hand I would not take,
Unless the gift contained thy heart;
Far better for each other's sake
To wear life's galling chain apart!
I love thee, worship thee! but still,
If deep within that heart of thine,
My passion wakes no answering thrill,
I would not wish to call thee mine."

"Without thee, life would be a waste
My heart of every pleasure void,
For bliss though offered to the taste
Without thee, could not be enjoyed.
But since my love availeth not,
Doth in thy soul no echo make
I would not have thee share my lot,
Oh, better that my heart should break!

"Farewell! though it is death to part;
Farewell! 'tis more than death to me;
I cannot teach my self-willed heart
To beat for any one but thee!
And yet, though doomed to love thee still,
Since deep within that heart of thine,
My passion wakes no answering thrill,
I would not wish to call thee mine!"

"Those are beautiful lines, but very sad ones, too," said Bonnard, when he had finished reading the poem. "But

what have you and I to do with sadness, dear?" and he put one arm around her waist and drew her close to her side.

"I don't know what you mean," she faltered, trying to get away from him, her cheeks aflame with blushes.

"Yes you do," he positively declared; "you know I love you."

"I don't know anything of the kind," she retorted poutingly. "I wish you wouldn't come here again, Mr. Bonnard."

A sharp spasm struck through Bonnard's heart; he released her instantly, and almost pushed her from him. Two red spots suddenly darted into his cheeks like a flame of fire; his eyes flashed, and his lips compressed; his voice was reproachful as he said:

"I never dreamed that my society was distasteful to you, Miss Estelle, or you may be sure I would not under any circumstance have troubled you. In the future, however, I will remain away since you wish it so. Those lines," and he pointed to the poem he had read, "are a very appropriate expression of my feelings for you; but you are unworthy of my love. Will you kindly give me my hat and coat, Miss Richmond?"

He placed the book he held on a table and then stood before her grave, stern, and utterly unrelenting, waiting for her to bring him the articles named. With a proud, little toss of her head, she went for them, but her heart was heavy with sorrow. She had not looked for such an ending! She had meant him to say something pretty about the poem in connection with herself. And now here was the whole matter all jumbled up, because of her inability to say the correct thing or remain silent. And he loved her too, and he was going away angry, for she wouldn't explain; no; she wouldn't! but, oh, oh, oh! how terrible it all was!

She brought him his coat and hat after a long absence, and

tried to restrain the desire she felt to cry, as she watched him put them on ; when he was all ready to go, he said :

“ You’ve ruined my life, Miss Richmond, but I shall not stay in this city for you to glory over my misery. I shall go to Europe or some other place ; it matters not where. And now, good-by ! ”

He held out his hand ; but she did not place hers in it ; instead she gave him one last appealing look, and suddenly burst into tears.

“ You do love me then after all, Essie ? ” said Bonnard clasping her to him with passionate tenderness.

She did not answer in words ; but her arms tightened about his neck in eloquent assent.

“ And you won’t go to Europe ? ” she asked some time later when they were seated on the sofa, their hands tightly clasped together.

“ No ; to be sure not. Unless on our wedding tour. ”

“ And you don’t think me a silly little thing ? ” she went on, running her fingers up and down his arm with a gentle, caressing motion.

“ My dear ! ” Bonnard tenderly expostulated.

“ And you’re sure you love me ? ”

“ I never was more sure of anything in my life than that, ” he laughed.

“ And you don’t care for Mrs. Wayne ? Not the tiniest bit ? ”

“ I love only you ; and you are all I want. Now are you satisfied, you little witch ? ” And he kissed her. “ But mind, ” he added, “ don’t tease me again, by saying you wish me not to come to see you any more. ”

“ Indeed, I never will, now that I have found out you are such a hot-headed fellow, ” she answered good-humoredly.

“ But, Estelle, what will your father and aunt say to the agreement we have made ? ” Bonnard asked with some trepidation.

“Oh, auntie will be delighted ; as for my father, he always consents to whatever I want if it is reasonable. But, I suppose you had better write to him and ask for his consent.”

Bonnard said he'd do so that very night. Mr. Richmond expressed himself as delighted with the news when he heard of it ; was glad to know that his daughter had brains enough to appreciate Mr. Bonnard's offer, and not like most young women fall in love with some young scapegrace. But he, Mr. Richmond, felt called upon to advise them on one point ; his daughter was little more than a child in both years and experience, and he would therefore be delighted if they would wait at least a year before they thought of marrying. Of course under the circumstances Mr. Bonnard felt it his duty to comply with the old gentleman's wishes.

But the night Bonnard had proposed to Estelle, Mrs. Hawley grew so tired waiting for the young man to take his departure, that she actually fell asleep over her knitting. Two soft arms clinging round her neck, and a kiss imprinted on her brow awoke her. Looking up she saw her niece, as bright and wide awake as though it were noon-time instead of midnight.

“Oh, auntie, congratulate me ! ” exclaimed the young lady. “I'm to marry Mr. Bonnard. He's proposed ; and oh ! I'm so happy ! ”

And catching up her skirts, she whirled round and round in a wild waltz. Mrs. Hawley's drowsiness disappeared in a moment ; she praised Mr. Bonnard to an extent that she had never praised anyone else ; declared he was the most sensible young man she knew, was a gentleman, and all manner of other nice things ; and her dear niece ought to be happy indeed, and she gave them both her blessing.

When Bonnard arrived at home, he was surprised to find his sister up. As it was past twelve o'clock Louis said it was ridiculous for her to wait up for him. But she told him that she had been to bed, but had become so frightened over a

strange, horrible dream, she could no longer sleep. She had dreamed that she stood before a great, yawning pit, black as night ; but when her eyes had grown accustomed to the darkness, she saw it contained a mass of human bones, all charred and blackened beyond recognition. On the top of them lay Edward, apparently asleep. But although she called him until her voice was hoarse he never answered ; she was still calling him when she awoke.

Louis laughed at her dream, and said it was no wonder she had dreamed of death, because he had become engaged to be married ; to dream of death meant that she would hear of a marriage and now, here was her dream about to be realized. Though Agnes was very happy over the engagement of her brother and Estelle, still the news did not altogether banish her fright.

When she retired for a second time that night, she tried to think of other things, but the uncanny dream returned again and again, and strangely associated with it was the thought : " To-day is the 8th ; Edward is to perform in Denver."

CHAPTER XVI.

SORROW AS A HEALER OF DIFFERENCES.

WHEN Agnes looked out of her bedroom window the following morning, the fog was so thick that she could hardly discern the houses opposite. The street was all dark and wet as though a heavy rain had fallen, and the few pedestrians who passed shivered and drew up the collars of their great coats.

Mastering her very natural desire to creep back again to bed, Agnes went below, and soon had bright, roaring fires burning.

At exactly eight o'clock her brother made his appearance in the dining-room, yawning and shivering. He took up his posi-

tion in front of the fire, and stretching out his hands to the welcome heat, fell to thinking, while Agnes set about preparing breakfast. When they were seated at the table, it suddenly occurred to Louis that something was missing.

“Agnes,” he said, “has the morning’s paper come yet?”

Agnes left the room to get it. As she was about to hand it to him, startling headlines in the paper attracted her attention. Looking again she read :

“A TERRIBLE FIRE IN DENVER !

“THE PRINCIPAL THEATRE ENTIRELY DESTROYED !!

“OVER A HUNDRED PEOPLE THOUGHT TO HAVE PERISHED IN THE FLAMES, INCLUDING THE ACTORS !!!”

As she had got thus far a blackness came before her eyes. She felt herself falling, and the words in the paper, as she tried to read them, grew into a confused mass. But she did not faint. In a moment she was herself again ; all her quick, mental faculties being under control ; but she shrank nevertheless with a woman’s natural dread from even looking at what might reveal a more appalling calamity. Her brother, who had been observing her strange actions now came to her side.

“Look !” she cried, pointing excitedly to the paper ; and the sound of her voice was so strange that it startled even herself. “Read that, and tell me if it is as I fear.”

He took in the headings at a glance ; then sought, with trembling hand, the list of the dead. He read the names of several actors who he knew were in the same company as Edward—then suddenly, and his heart almost ceased beating as he saw it, his eyes fell upon the name, “Edward Hawley.”

All the names he had read thus far were those of persons burned beyond recognition, but their identity had been discovered by the clothing they wore, or by tickets in their possession. The paper also alluded to one young actor who was missing, named Harry Dall.

Bonnard dreaded to look at Agnes for awhile, but clasped

her cold hands and besought her to be calm. She released herself from his grasp, and, staggering about the room in a half crazed way, with her teeth chattering, moaned that she now knew the worst. Her face was ghastly save for the two red spots on her cheeks, brought there by excitement. Her eyes gleamed, and were unnaturally large, and she seemed to have no idea whatever of what she was doing. For some minutes Louis stood motionless. At length he drew Agnes to the sofa and gently forced her to be seated. He did not speak to her however; he knew it would be useless, as only *she* could feel the unutterable anguish of this terrible tragedy, and all he could say would be thrown away on her for the moment. But, when the keenness of the blow had grown somewhat blunted, she grew quieter, and laid her aching head on the sofa.

Taking advantage of her present calm, Louis left the room for a few minutes to get his hat and coat. Meanwhile Agnes was thinking profoundly.

Ah, never again would she clasp poor Edward's hand and hear him express his great love for her; never would she be called upon henceforth to play the hypocrite; nothing would now hurt him! He had died without knowing of her fickleness, and she was spared the distress of disclosing it to him! He, and her love for him were dead and gone as utterly as though the great ocean had been their grave. Gone! with only the hollow mockery of memory to stir up the ashes of what had been!

"Sis, dear," broke in the solemn voice of Louis, "I'm going to see *his* mother and Essie. It is right that I should go and let them know, if they do not know of it already. You will try to be calm, will you not?"

He leaned tenderly over her, and stroked back her hair. She sat up and announced with strange calmness:

"I am going with you."

And in spite of all his expostulations, in a very little while she was ready to accompany him.

Arriving at Mrs. Hawley's, Estelle came to the door. Her eyes were swollen and red with weeping, and she was again overcome at the sight of them. Agnes left her brother in the hall trying to calm Estelle, and sought Mrs. Hawley. She found the old lady in the kitchen, and a great wave of pity and love thrilled through Agnes's heart. Was this the stern, unrelenting woman she had known?—this woman walking up and down the room, beating her breast, and wringing her hands?

Forgetting all the injustice the unhappy creature had heaped upon her, and everything else except that her heart yearned to comfort her, Agnes stepped close and laid her hand gently on her shoulder.

For a moment the old fierce hatred gleamed in Mrs. Hawley's eyes, then melted beneath the grave, sweet sympathy of her companion's face, to an expression of surprise and gentleness.

"Agnes," she softly said, stretching out her hand and touching the girl's cheek caressingly; "I am suffering a terrible loss."

Quite overcome, she wept bitterly; and Agnes, having gained her confidence, did her best to comfort her. It was rather surprising to see the two women—the one who had tried so hard to win love and friendship, and the other who had remained so obstinately unforgiving in her hatred—with their arms about each other and their tears mingling. Truly sorrow is a great healer of differences! Where all other means have failed in bringing about an understanding between people, sorrow has often prevailed. When a great calamity has cast its shadow upon us, our hearts are incapable of feeling anger or resentment; we yearn instinctively for sympathy even from our enemies, and how noble and tender it causes us to feel, when the hand we have perhaps often longed to clasp, has at last been extended to give the hearty, heart-felt wring of sympathy.

When Bonnard had made all the arrangements necessary in

the sad case, he took his departure, leaving Agnes to console Mrs. Hawley and Estelle, as both women desired her to remain with them. Even Mrs. Hawley was deeply impressed with Agnes's sympathy, for although the girl suffered poignantly herself, she did not allow her grief to get the better of her. She insisted upon Mrs. Hawley lying down and remaining quiet; dispatched poor, trembling Estelle to the nearest dry-goods house with a list of articles she was to get, to make up mourning dresses, as for herself, she was every where about the house; sweeping and dusting and lowering blinds, and doing everything that lay in her power.

Meanwhile Louis had communicated with the Denver authorities regarding his dead friend. He had begged them to forward his remains to Brooklyn at his expense; and also would they kindly let him know how the young man had been recognized, as there was no statement in the papers to that effect.

In due time, Mr. Bonnard learned that Edward had been recognized by a ring he wore which had his name inscribed on the inside, and that they had arranged to carry out his first request.

Mr. Richmond had also arrived in all haste in answer to a telegram Bonnard had sent him. But as he knew very little about soothing the distress of his sister and daughter, he remained very much to himself, and was thoroughly uncomfortable with the gloomy solitude that surrounded him. Agnes and Louis were the only ones he ventured to speak to on common-place subjects, as he well knew his daughter would reproach him for being unfeeling to think of anything just then, save poor Edward's death. As for his sister—Mr. Richmond was mortally afraid to even draw his breath in her presence. All day long, poor woman! she lay motionless on the sofa, staring into the fire, for Agnes, with her usual thoughtfulness had drawn the sofa nearer the stove so that she might be comfortable.

Mrs. Hawley's face had aged and fallen in unspeakably, and was ghastly in its very pallor. But she never spoke of her son. Only when Agnes was in the room did her eyes turn from the fire to gaze with a tender, loving expression on the girl's face; and when she was alone tears of remorse came to her as she thought: "Oh, how different everything might have been had she been kinder; for although she did not believe Agnes loved Edward, she would have been a true wife to him. But it could never be now, for *her* injustice had sent him to his death!"

But the day his poor burned remains were to arrive, her inability to act disappeared—she was full of excitement and stood by the window feverishly waiting.

When, in his long, narrow bed, he had been carried to the parlor (gloomy indeed now, had it never been so before) the undertaker drew Mr. Bonnard aside and spoke to him.

"Sir," he gravely said, pointing to the coffin; "you will see a terrible sight there; a sight unfit for anyone to behold; so use your judgment whether or not to allow friends to see him."

"Thank you, for your advice, sir," returned Bonnard gratefully. "I will look upon him first so that I will be able to judge."

They moved forward, and the undertaker unfastened the lid of the coffin and raised it. One wild, horrified glance and Bonnard drew back, faint and heart-sick from the awful sight he had seen.

"Quick!" he hoarsely whispered as he heard footsteps approaching, "fasten it!"

The warning was given none too soon, for the next moment Mrs. Hawley, Estelle, Agnes, and Mr. Richmond had entered the room.

"Mr. Bonnard," said the unhappy mother, "I wish to see my son."

Her voice was strangely calm, but neither the undertaker nor

Bonnard heeded her request. She spoke again ; but this time almost imperiously.

“ You heard what I said, Mr. Bonnard ? ”

“ Yes,” replied the young man very gravely and sadly, “ I have heard what you have said Mrs. Hawley ; but I beg—I entreat of you by the love which you bore him, not to look upon him as he is now.”

“ I must,” she returned firmly ; “ he’s my son.”

But as this declaration seemed to have no effect, she cried wildly as she leaned over the coffin :

“ I sent him to his death ; it was all my fault ! Now I want to contemplate what my cruelty has brought about ! Let me see him ! my Edward ! my son ! Let me see him ! ”

Knowing it would be useless to argue longer with her, Bonnard turned to Estelle and Agnes, and said :

“ Go to the other end of the room. This is no sight for you to see.”

He spoke commandingly, and they meekly obeyed. Bonnard then drew close to Mrs. Hawley, and put his arm about her, and nodded to the undertaker in answer to the man’s questioning eyes. Mr. Richmond had withdrawn to the other end of the room with the others, his face almost colorless.

As Mrs. Hawley’s eyes fell upon what had once been the face of her son, her first impulse was to fly from the spot. The kind, good-natured, jolly face was no more ! It had gone with his gentle spirit, and what remained looked charred and blackened.

The eyes of his mother glared as though she had gone mad ; and when she looked at him a second time, a piercing shriek followed in quick succession by others fell from her lips. She tore her hair, beat her hands, cursed herself as the cause of his terrible end, and so she was led from the room and Agnes sought to comfort her. She kissed the lips that had spoken many unkind words to her, tenderly ; calmed the excited brain with the soft, caressing pressure of her cool hands ; soothed

the tortured heart with her gentle, pitying words, until at last the poor woman had become calm.

The following day when they buried him, she went to the funeral, and everyone observed that she was changed. She clung to Agnes's strong, young arm, with a pitiable, confiding trust, and did what ever she bade her. All the old fierceness was utterly quenched under the terrible blow of this sorrow. When they had lowered the coffin into the grave, a young man amongst the group of mourners stepped forward to say a few words in reference to the death of his old friend. In the solemn silence, disturbed only by the breeze which stirred the bare, gaunt branches of the trees, he spoke. After remarking about the goodness and nobleness of Edward's heart, of his generosity and kindness, for only good things should be remembered of those who die, he ended with the pathetic lines :

“Leave him to God's watching eye,
Trust him to the hand that made him.
Mortal love weeps idly by,
God alone has power to aid him.
Lay him low, lay him low,
In the clover or the snow !
What cares he ? he cannot know ;
Lay him low ! ”

Even the sternest hearts melted as they listened, for all mourned him deeply ; and his death had been so terrible ! Many a sob was heard as they decked his grave with their kindly offerings of flowers. He was well loved ! He had been a good son, a loyal friend, and as such he was mourned. But while their tears were falling on his grave, on a hospital cot in Denver, lay an unknown man supposed to be the young actor, Harry Dall, who was found in the wreck later, raving of Agnes, mother, and Essie.

CHAPTER XVII.

MRS. HAWLEY'S SECRET.

SECRETS cannot be kept forever—this fact is pretty well established. They will leak out sometime or other in spite of our utmost precaution.

The mystery of the upper rooms in Mrs. Hawley's house was the subject of much wonder and considerable comment to those who regarded it as a secret ; and though their curiosity had been awakened to such an extent that they had tried to find out why the rooms remained unoccupied, nothing had as yet been brought to light regarding it.

Mrs. Hawley herself, however, was the means of satisfying everybody's curiosity ; not intentionally of course.

After the burial of the man she supposed to be her son, like most people of her intensity of character, she took her sorrow deeply to heart. Had she been a young woman she would still have looked upon life cheerfully, but she concluded she had nothing to live for now that *he* was dead.

When one is regardless as to whether one lives or dies, one is naturally inconsiderate as to the state of one's health ; when at other times we have been most careful to avoid draughts, in this melancholy period, everything is really unthought of except our misery. But draughts will insist upon being recognized, although we may wish to ignore them, and they come most unpleasantly upon one's notice.

Now, Mrs. Hawley when in a sad mood one day, was careless as to where she seated herself. For long hours she remained in the same place, where a piercing draught blew in upon her. The result was, a severe cold accompanied by a high fever, which compelled her to take to her bed. Dr.

Wayne pronounced her case as hopeless, for the cold had settled upon her lungs. Agnes now became her constant attendant, and it was to her Mrs. Hawley looked for comfort in everything.

One night while sitting by the poor old woman's bedside, after a long, weary watch, Agnes's head had dropped forward upon her breast and she fell asleep. So very tired was she, that she had failed to hear the noise Mrs. Hawley had made as she cautiously arose from her bed. A fierce strength seemed to possess her; her eyes blazed with fever and altogether she made rather an uncanny picture as she went from the room carrying the lighted candle in her hand, her loosened gray hair streaming about her ghastly white face, and clothed only in her white night-robe.

It was a bitterly cold night, but she seemed unconscious of it. The draughts in the hall caused the light of the candle to grow so small that it looked like the bluish flicker of a sulphur match when just lit. But she went on with a firm step nevertheless, the surroundings being so very familiar to her. Ascending the stairs leading to the unoccupied part of the house, Mrs. Hawley at last paused before a door, and selecting a key from amongst a bunch she had in her hand, she opened it. Then, turning aside a black velvet curtain, she staggered forward and fell upon her knees in the middle of the room, with a cry of agony.

In the meantime, Agnes had awakened with a start as though conscious of some impending calamity. She was greatly surprised to find the room in total darkness, but concluded that the candle had burnt out, so quickly sought another. When the welcome light again flooded the room, she saw with alarm that Mrs. Hawley was not in bed. She snatched the candle from the table and hurried out into the hall. She called her name, and then listened with bated breath for an answer; but none came. Shivering with fear she almost ran to Mr.

Richmond's room, and rapping loudly on the door, did not wait for an answer but entered.

Mr. Richmond was sitting bolt upright in his bed, fairly startled out of his senses by her sudden noisy entrance.

"Wh—what's the matter?" he gasped as he caught sight of her white face.

"Quick; dress yourself!" she cried. "Mrs. Hawley left her room while I was asleep, and I don't know where she is. I will wait outside while you dress, and please hurry."

It seemed an age, although in reality it was but a few minutes before Mr. Richmond joined her.

They searched the lower part of the house first but to no purpose, then Mr. Richmond suggested a search above. Finally they came to the room Mrs. Hawley had entered. She was speaking as they drew near, so they kept very quiet, even going so far as to screen the light of the candle they carried so they might not be seen while they listened.

"Yes," they heard her reproachfully saying, "you were weak; it was your only fault, but you were weak—weak! And yet I loved you with all the strength of my passionate heart. Poor heart! It had yearned for love so much that when *you* swore to cherish it, it yielded. But you were weak—weak!"

Her voice died away in a low wail of utter misery, and the three listeners—for Estelle had joined her father and Agnes—drew nearer the door. Agnes put her hands out and they came in contact with the velvet curtain; this she drew aside noiselessly. A start of wonder and amazement shot through the little group as they looked into the room.

In the centre of the floor stood the candle Mrs. Hawley had taken with her, which threw out a faint reflection; but shining in through a colored glass skylight, was the moon, filling the room with a rich purple and golden radiance, and falling upon the marble-tiled floor in many grotesque forms. The walls

of the apartment were almost hidden from sight with works of art. The high-backed, carved, oaken furniture too stood out in bold relief; but the most surprising sight of all was the picture before which Mrs. Hawley was kneeling—a large painting, almost life-size which represented a handsome-looking man uncertain as to whether he will choose between “Duty” or “Love” as his life companion. On the right of the man stood “Duty” represented by Mrs. Hawley when she was young. She was holding out her left hand to the man’s gaze, and pointing with the forefinger of the other hand to her wedding-ring. On the left of the man knelt “Love,” a fair, beautiful creature, with a sweet, loving face, who appealed to the man’s heart with her eyes aglow with passionate devotion. The man’s arms were half extended as though he were about to clasp this lovely being to his heart, but his action was restrained as he gazed at the wedding-ring “Duty” displayed.

As Mr. Richmond, Agnes, and Estelle watched, Mrs. Hawley arose from her groveling posture, and taking the candle in her hand, held it up close to the pictured face of the man. They could hear her panting like a wild animal as she did so. Then stepping back a few feet, she broke into an unearthly laugh which caused a shudder to run through those who listened.

“Ah!” she hissed, shaking her fist in the man’s face, “you did not deserve the devotion I paid to your memory all these years. You were a traitor! You spurned the hand that loved and assisted you! Was I to blame because I was a stumbling-block in the way of your happiness? Yet *I*, your wife, was spurned and deserted for *her*!”

She threw the candle she held, at the face of “Love,” with fierce anger; As it struck the picture, it was extinguished, and fell upon the floor, leaving the room lit only by the beauty of the moon streaming in through the colored glass of the skylight.

“I wonder,” she went on, with fierce vehemence, “what

caused you to paint this picture? Did you paint it as an explanation of your struggle ere you had decided to desert me? Ah, that was weak—contemptibly weak! No, no! not contemptibly!—only weak—terribly weak; but weakness was your fault, my husband!”

She ceased speaking, and began to moan pitifully as she walked to and fro in front of the picture. Finally she paused again and gazed for a long time at it as though meditating some object.

“Yes, it must be done,” she at length said with a wail of despair. “No one must know of my folly! No one must see this painting, which I have kept for all these long, weary years to keep me from believing anything wrong of him. It was all weakness—nothing more—which caused him to desert me; and she lured him from me. Yes, I must do it; I will die soon, and I cannot bear to think that they will laugh at me for what they will deem my foolishness. I must do it; I *must*!”

Agnes and Estelle had desired to make known to her their presence several times, but Mr. Richmond had insisted that they should wait a while. Now however, as Mrs. Hawley was in the act of thrusting her hand with the aid of her bunch of keys through the picture and so ruin it forever, Agnes sprang forward with a cry of remonstrance, and arrested her intention. Estelle and her father now showed themselves.

“Ah, you have been spying on me!” she wrathfully exclaimed turning round and glaring at them. “Well, why don’t you laugh and mock at what I have revered? It must seem very foolish to you, especially when it is such a little thing to satisfy the curiosity you have all felt so long. Why don’t you laugh and jeer at it, I say!”

No response was made to her bitter speech, but Agnes put her arm about her and gently admonished her to go back to her bed.

“No, no!” she replied angrily. “I won’t go to bed; I

must stay here. Soon I will no longer come, but while life lasts, I must remain here amongst the surroundings of the one I loved, in spite of his weakness. Ay, he was weak—weak!”

But though the “spirit was willing, the flesh was weak.” The strength that had nerved her thus far suddenly gave out, and she would have fallen had not Agnes and Mr. Richmond caught her.

She was shivering and her teeth chattering with the cold. They lifted her hastily up with the intention of carrying her below, and in her weak, helpless state, she of course made no resistance, only as they were carrying her out of the room she turned her head, and her eyes rested on the pictured face of her husband in a lingering, loving glance of farewell.

It was her last glance of consciousness! All that night they watched beside her, for her exposure to the cold had hastened her approaching end. She lay on the bed unconscious of her surroundings, with only her panting breath, and vacant, staring eyes to show that life still remained. As the rising sun came streaming in at the window and fell upon her face, her spirit left her. They closed the sightless eyes, and folded the poor hands over the silent heart with tender reverence. They spoke in soft whispers of her sorrowful life, and declared it was no wonder that it had soured her disposition and made her a hater of her kind.

After her funeral, Agnes, her brother, Estelle, and Mr. Richmond went to the studio, to arrange as to what was to be done with the paintings.

“I am sure,” said Mr. Richmond, “that which my sister had kept sacred for so long, should not now be exhibited to public gaze; therefore, I say they should be destroyed.”

The others agreed with him, and they set to work to accomplish that object. When they had torn all the smaller paintings, they paused before “Duty or Love,” and studied all the beauties of the work, and could hardly bring themselves to the task of destroying it.

“That man,” said Mr. Richmond, “was not mean or intentionally bad, but I should like to have had the pleasure of horse whipping him. Although he was very poor, we were good friends in our youth, and becoming acquainted with my sister, they finally married. He subsequently began to study painting, for which he had marked ability, and they seemed happy and contented. But it lasted only three years. He fell in love with *that* girl, and notwithstanding the fact that he was a husband and father, he fled with her. But retribution was quick upon his track. They were both killed the night they fled, in a railroad accident. My poor sister, from being one of the most amiable creatures, developed into the disagreeable woman you have known. But come, let us to work and do away with all that remains of her miserable life.”

And without waiting for the assistance of the others, he raised a knife and plunged it with all his force at the face of the man, cutting and tearing it to pieces until there was nothing left of what had been.

Agnes turned away with a sad heart; the unfortunate circumstances of this woman's life had a serious effect upon her. She pitied all three of the actors in it, but most of all she pitied Mrs. Hawley; and when she thought that she too, might be the means of perhaps making another woman equally as miserable, she thoroughly abhorred herself and declared it should not be.

CHAPTER XVIII.

RETURNED FROM THE DEAD.

AFTER Mr. Richmond had returned to his business accompanied by his daughter, the old routine of Agnes and Louis's life went on as usual. Their only visitors were Dr. and Mrs. Wayne, who sometimes came together, but generally alone.

Louis still continued to be attentive to Mrs. Wayne without telling her of his engagement to Estelle, as he wished to fully enjoy her humiliation. But Agnes, wishing to discourage the woman's mad infatuation for her brother, had told her of his engagement. It was of no avail, however, for she regarded it simply as a piece of exaggeration on Agnes's part and thought so little of it that she did not even mention it to Louis. Agnes and her brother were continually at war with each other on that subject; yet no mention of her own love for Dr. Wayne was ever discussed between them.

Whether or not Dr. Wayne was suspicious of his wife's affection for Bonnard, he never mentioned it even to Agnes. But perhaps, too, it never occurred to him that such was the case, for he had seen dozens of men paying her the same attentions, to whom she had been equally as charming, yet nothing had come of it; besides, he might have been too much interested in his own case with Agnes, to have observed her.

At the most unexpected times he made his appearance at the Willow Street house, until Agnes grew to be a regular house-bird; in fact she went out seldom now in her dread that he might call and she would miss him. He spoke to her continually of their future—and she listened to him, but never gave satisfactory responses to anything he said; for she knew—or at least believed she knew—she never would consent to the plans he had proposed. Indeed, her determination to do right was even expressed in the fact that for every caress he lavished upon her, she experienced a pang of keen reproach; yet she was thoroughly miserable if he even spoke more coldly than usual.

Sometimes a mistrust of his affection would crop up in her mind, for she had placed him on a high pedestal, and could not understand how he could love a poor, insignificant girl like herself. And on such occasions she would be very shy and seem almost afraid of him.

Agnes made but one attempt to reconcile Dr. Wayne to her opinions. She pointed out to him how unhappy Mrs. Wayne would become were *she* to coincide with his views; and cited as an example of what his wife's unhappiness might be—the sad story of Mrs. Hawley's life.

“But,” he had remonstrated, “there is a great difference between the two cases. Mrs. Hawley loved her husband devotedly. No, no, Agnes, you are entirely wrong in your deductions. I have considered every circumstance, and am perfectly justified in acting as I intend. The only thing that remains now is to follow out what I think, and that I am ready to do when your consent is obtained; and when is that to be?”

The foregoing conversation had taken place in front of the church where Agnes attended. As Dr. Wayne had asked the question—“and when is that to be?” she did not reply, but said they had better go inside, which they did accordingly.

The church was almost deserted, and the lights were quite dim. Selecting a quiet seat, they silently listened for awhile to the solemn strains of the organ, welling up through the vast structure in uncertain melody, for the organist was just then only practicing.

“Yes,” Dr. Wayne at length said, in a soft whisper, “I am justified in making my life as it ought to be. Constant unhappiness ill suits one of my temperament. Neglect, coldness and contempt have been my lot—and the change must come to a more happy and peaceful issue. Is it too much to ask whether my love has been scorned and trampled upon?—for, Agnes, I did love this woman once—dearly, devotedly. Do you not now think that I am justified?”

Agnes did not reply at once, but fingered thoughtfully with the folds of her dress. At last she raised her eyes, and turning them full upon his face, said very gravely:

“No; when you married Mrs. Wayne you had no fault to

find with her ; if you made a mistake, you were unfortunate. But life is so short, you ought to try to make the best of it."

"My God, Agnes ! if you only knew the misery of what you suggested you would not thus advise me. No, I am sure you would not !"

"Hush ! don't speak so loud ; everyone will hear you," cautioned Agnes, laying her hand on his arm with a restraining gesture. He caught and held her hand and smiled tenderly on her.

"I wonder, Agnes, if you really mean all you say ?" he questioned, modulating his voice. "I honestly believe it would be as hard for you to see me no more, as it would be for me. Would it not, dear, in spite of all your reasoning ?"

"Yes, yes ; I know it would," she returned, giving his hand a passionate pressure full of her deep, unutterable love for him.

"Then why," he asked, "are you so obstinate ? Why will you not let us be happy ?"

"Oh, don't, don't !" she entreated, her voice fairly trembling with misery ; "speak no more of it, I implore you !"

And the sudden bright glare of the lights, and the entrance of the minister, compelled the doctor to submit to her pleading. Although apparently attentive, neither paid attention to the sermon that was being preached. Dr. Wayne was cogitating deeply of what Agnes said. At times a smile would play round his lips, and then again a frown would gather on his brow, according to the light in which her sayings dawned upon him. Agnes was very sad. As she looked at the altar where she was to have stood with Edward Hawley, to have taken the marriage vows, all the old happy days associated with that first love returned to her memory. How innocent she had been, and how childlike ! What would she not give to be as she once was ! Innocent, childlike, and happy ! Alas, she would never be so again ! She was a woman now—a sad, miserable woman ! And she hated herself for occupy-

ing a place in Dr. Wayne's heart which his wife alone should have held—hated herself, as only people of strong conscientiousness and nobility of character can hate and reproach themselves.

And yet, looking into the face of the man she worshipped, she felt that but to see him sometimes and hear his voice were well worth all her suffering.

As they walked along the street after service, Dr. Wayne said somewhat reproachfully :

“If you loved me, Agnes, you would consent to my plans.”

“You are torturing me!” she cried. “Why will you doubt *my* love, when you know it would be impossible for woman to love man better. You know that!”

“You may love me, Agnes,” he quietly returned, “but after all you dread the opinion of the world.”

She was silent, because she knew it would be useless to argue the question with him. She could not tell him that she believed were she to consent to his proposals, that he in time would cease to love her—and all through his loss of respect. Were she to say that, he would vow to the contrary, and how was she to know what the future would bring forth when there was no legal tie binding them. Besides, looking into the future, she saw herself as a mother despised by her children because of their birth. Her loving heart sickened at the thought and the blood rushed in a burning glow of shame to her face.

“I'm afraid I have held your love for me, such as it is, too highly,” continued Dr. Wayne somewhat impatiently.

“I am sorry that you should think so,” she quietly returned.

“Come, let us not quarrel, Agnes, as I see we shall do if our discourse continues in this way. Let me tell you how I came to commit this miserable mistake that has wrecked my life.

“The love I felt for Harriet, is not the kind I feel for you, Agnes. My love for *you* is based upon my admiration of your

intellect and your kind, loving heart. It is an affection born to live forever. My love for *her* on the contrary, was formed under the impression of a beautiful face and captivating manner. If a young man can spend an evening in the society of such a woman without falling in love with her, you may depend he will never after be caught in her meshes. But youth will yield to such charms, and as I was no exception, I too yielded up my heart. Well, Agnes, it is needless to go into the details of what our life has been ; enough that I married her believing her to be an angel, but I found she was only made of clay. Now, having made such a mistake through no fault of my own, except the inexperience of my youth, am I not truly justified, loving you as I do—to try and brighten the remainder of my life in your dear presence ; especially when we are so well adapted to each other ? Would you not seek to do as I yourself, were you in my place ? Come, be honest and tell me ? ”

And he clasped her trembling, little hands warmly, and sought her eyes with a pleading expression. When she raised them to his eager gaze, they were full of tenderest love, as she falteringly said :

“ I—I’m afraid I would.”

“ I knew you would agree with me,” he joyously exclaimed.

“ Yes, I do agree with you, and were I in your place I believe I should do the same, but I am a woman.”

“ A most obstinate one at that,” he cried impatiently. “ Here are you pretending you love me, yet you will not comfort me by acceding to my proposals.”

“ I am only trying to do what is right,” she sadly returned.

“ Ah well, I shall win you yet, my darling, in spite of all. Do you know, Agnes, there ought to be a law giving a man or woman the right to annul a marriage when they discover they are unfitted for each other ; do you not think so ? ”

“No; were there such a law to exist there would be nothing good or noble left in the world. Amongst my married acquaintances, I know of but two or three couples who are really contented. The rest complain of the faults of their husbands or wives, and declare had they known of them before marriage they would never have come together. One pretty woman I know, who has three children and whose husband is a poor, but industrious man, always laments her foolishness in having rejected the son of his employer. The man she rejected is still unmarried, and pays her attentions. Should she desert her husband and children for this other man, think of all they will suffer. Then too, there are men who tire of their wives, simply because their beauty has faded. Because a man is unable to support his wife in ease, or because a woman’s beauty has faded, must their husbands and wives tire of them? Oh, such treatment is contemptible, and shameful!”

“You are right there, Agnes,” agreed Dr. Wayne. “But still, how about those who, like myself, are not to blame for their unhappiness?”

“They should become philosophers and make the best of their lives.”

“Then to make the best of my life I must have you to share it with me,” was his quick reply.

“No, no,” she expostulated; “I meant that they should make the best of their lives—by adapting themselves to their companions.”

“So you would have me become a flatterer to gratify my wife’s vanity? Heartless, likewise, so that her coldness would not affect me? In fact, you would have me exactly like herself, for in spite of all people may say to the contrary, a man’s nature should be as like his wife’s as possible, so that they may agree and live happily. Is that what you mean, Agnes?”

“I will not answer, because I see you are determined

to be obstinate and will not agree with me," she laughingly replied.

"You too, are obstinate; but, never mind! You will yet yield or else you do not love me. And now, good-night, Agnes."

They had reached the corner of Willow Street, and he had decided not to go nearer the house, so that there would be no cause for her friends to comment upon their being in each other's company were they seen. They clasped hands warmly and lingeringly, and she asked huskily:

"Are you angry with me?"

"Nothing you could say would ever make me really angry, my precious little comforter," he assured her.

She desired so very much to tell him that she would always remain true in her love for him—to cheer and brighten his lonely, sad heart with her friendship—to rejoice in his happiness and condole with him in his misery. But words failed her, and she could only hide her emotion, by bidding him a hasty "good-night."

Her brother was absent when she entered the house, so she hastened to her own room, and feeling fatigued and depressed went to bed. But Agnes did not go directly to sleep, for she thought for a long time over her conversation with Dr. Wayne.

Oh what rapture to lay her head on his breast and call him husband. But, alas! no such happiness was in store for her! She almost wished that Mrs. Wayne would do some rash act that would give the doctor sufficient cause to sue for a divorce, for her wrath was great indeed against Harriet for not appreciating her husband more than she did. It seemed to Agnes such an impossibility not to love and pity him; he was so good, kind, and noble!

She had fallen asleep while thinking, and her senses were lost in the deep, refreshing rest she was enjoying, when a loud knocking at her room door awakened her.

"Agnes, Agnes, awake! Come here!" called a voice which she recognized as her brother's.

"I'm coming," she answered as she sprang out of bed. Then slipping on some clothing, she opened the door.

"Oh, sis, such good news! But dress yourself first, then come down-stairs and I will tell you all. And mind that you make yourself look your prettiest."

He was gone ere Agnes had a chance to ask an explanation, but losing no time she began her toilet. In a very little while she was ready to go below. Her brother was standing in the hall near the parlor door, waiting for her when she came down, and she was surprised at the happy light in his eyes; and yet, he was grave.

"Agnes, little sister," he said, laying his hands on her shoulders, and speaking tenderly and seriously; "we have a visitor; can you guess who?"

"Estelle?"

"No, but one whom you esteem as dearly."

She was thoughtful a moment, then shook her head and declared she could not think who it was.

"I don't know how to break the news to you;" he said in a sad, puzzled tone. "Are you sure, Agnes, that you can bear to hear very, *very* glad tidings?"

"Joy will not kill," she returned, laughingly.

"Well then, listen. Don't get excited. You remember, Agnes, that the body of the man we supposed to be Edward——"

"Supposed!" she exclaimed, interrupting him, her face white with the horror of a nameless fear.

"Yes," he went on, falteringly, "*supposed*; for the features were unrecognizable, and the ring he wore alone gave us the right to infer the body to be Edward's. But by a strange—a trivial circumstance, we were led to a wrong supposition. The ring the dead man wore was of course Edward's, but it was not Edward who wore it. What caused that terrible mis-

take was this: The dead man, Harry Dall, had been admiring the ring just before the fire broke out, and had asked Edward to let him try it on. Dall had just slipped it over his finger when the cry of 'fire!' rang through the theatre. The flames spread rapidly and cut off their escape by the stage door, and the theatre was so crowded, that to perish seemed inevitable. How it happened that Edward escaped is a mystery. But when he was found next day amongst the *debris* of the burned building he was unconscious. Being a stranger in the city, no one knew who he was, for the rest of the company had all perished. Quite naturally therefore, when looking over the list of actors, they concluded him to be Harry Dall, while the real Harry Dall was supposed to be Edward. When Edward had recovered sufficiently to travel, he came on directly to Brooklyn; and there, sis, the tale is told, and he is waiting to see you."

Agnes Bonnard did not speak or cry out. She had not the power to do either; for very deep emotions, whether of sorrow, joy, or disbelief will rob us of the ability to express our feelings for the moment.

Her brother opened the parlor door, and pushed her gently forward. An instant later she had entered the room, the door had closed softly behind her, and she was alone with the lover who had come back to claim her.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE BROKEN PROMISE.

AGNES had heard Edward Hawley's quick step as he rose to meet her; and her name was uttered in a voice that thrilled with love and gladness. She saw his kind face animated with the joy of their meeting, his arms were extended to enfold her, yet still she did not speak, or move one step to welcome him.

Her eyes sought his with an expression of appeal in their solemn depths. He did not understand the look, but thought she was frightened to see him after supposing him dead.

Drawing near, he raised one of her icy cold hands and clasped it closely in his ; she did not withdraw it, but it lay limp in his clasp.

“ Agnes, don’t be frightened. Speak to me, dear ; tell me you are glad to see me again,” he earnestly entreated.

Still she did not speak, but her eyes were full of piteous appeal.

He had got his arm around her, had drawn her close to him, and was about to kiss her, when she suddenly broke from his embrace.

“ It is so long since I have kissed you, dear,” he said with a forced laugh, “ you have become quite shy. What must I do to accustom you to me again ? ”

“ Act only as my friend, and cease to think that we have ever been lovers,” she said, placing her hand on his arm entreatingly. “ Edward,” she went on with assumed calmness, drawing him toward a sofa, “ let me explain my meaning.”

“ I want no explanation,” he rejoined somewhat impatiently. “ I only want you to assure me that you still love me, and that you are glad to have me back.”

“ I *am* glad to see you again. I have always loved you as a dear friend, Edward.”

“ But I don’t want you to speak of mere friendship ; I want you to tell me straightforwardly that you love me. Why will you be so cruel as to pretend you have ceased to care for me, when my heart is hungering to hear you say : ‘ I love you ! ’ Oh, Agnes, for the sake of the old days be kind ! With poor mother gone, I am in the greater need of your sympathy and love. Be kind, Agnes ! Say it ! Say it ! ”

“ Oh, Edward,” she sobbed, falling on her knees in front of him. “ I would to God, from the bottom of my heart, I could in all truth, say it ! ”

“What do I hear, Agnes? Am I to understand that you have ceased to love me?” he asked in a hollow voice, pressing his hand to his heart with a low moan as though the pain were greater than he could bear.

She raised her head and fondled his hands tenderly, pitying him so deeply that she was almost tempted to declare it was a joke; but the thought of Dr. Wayne gave her the determination to be strong whatever the cost.

“Edward, you must forgive me. Indeed, I am not to blame because my feelings for you are changed. I had always meant to love you, only you!”

“Agnes, oh, Agnes! was it for this I returned? Was it for this God spared my life, only to curse it? Is the remembrance of our dear, happy days all of no consequence to you now, that you can speak of our lives in future as being bound only by friendship? Do you remember how you used to love me—how your lips have met mine in fond assurance of your affection, and now, suddenly, after only a few months absence, I return to find you changed. Can this be true? Oh, Agnes, tell me it is not so! Tell me that the little girl I loved as my very life, is still true to me!”

“I can’t say it; I can’t say it!” she moaned in anguish.

“Then may God forgive you for your treachery; I never shall!” came slowly and wrathfully from Edward’s lips. “You led me on as no honest woman would. You, whom I believed so guileless, so innocent, whom I would have trusted with my life, have inflicted upon me the cruelest pang that you could inflict! Had God Himself sworn you were false, I would still have trusted you! If you found that your feelings for me were changing, why did you not tell me so honestly? Do you recollect that night when I questioned you on the subject? Ah, you do? Do you remember too, how you came and put your arms around my neck and declared my doubts were all without foundation? Oh, wretch, wretch! and you

can look in my face and say you are sorry? Bah! what care I for your sorrow! My heart is broken—broken!”

He cast her from him angrily, and mad in the bitterness of his anguish, walked up and down the room with rapid strides. His chest heaved with sobs, and his eyes were blinded with tears.

Crushed with grief over the misery she had wrought, Agnes had sank upon the floor in front of a chair, and with her face buried in her hands was weeping softly. Suddenly she was lifted to her feet and clasped to Edward's breast in the old familiar way, and he was caressing and soothing her, his gentle heart full of repentance for his harshness.

“Oh, dearest,” he entreated passionately, “forgive me, forgive me! You never deserved one word of reproach from me. I have been mad with anger; this blow was so unexpected. Remember that I had cherished you as my very own for so long that I thought nothing could ever come between us. As you have ceased to love me, however, though God knows it will be a terrible task, I must learn to look upon what is to be, in its true light; I must think that what I may suffer will be for your happiness, for I'm not fool enough to suppose that you have ceased to love me unless your heart went into the keeping of another. May God bless both you and *him*, whoever he may be, for your sake, my lost darling!”

He pressed his lips tenderly and reverently to her brow, and smoothed her hair, and stifled the sob that rose to his lips, as he turned hastily away.

It is wonderful how grandly self-sacrificing human nature can sometimes prove. The noble and generous words Edward had spoken were not said without a pang of the keenest anguish. His heart was bleeding with the hungering passion he felt to possess her—in the very moment too when he had renounced her—as it had never bled before. And Agnes knew it.

Yet just then she dared not, for the sake of that suffering,

speaking one word to him of his self-sacrifice. She knew that to do so would make him more unhappy. But, how her heart ached ! How unworthy she was of this man's love ; how contemptibly had she treated him, and still he was kind and loving toward her—God bless him !

When he had mastered his emotion and was preparing to leave, he said very tenderly as he stood in front of her :

“ Never again, Agnes, trifle with a man's affection. Remember that all are not so weak as to forgive, and that your life may pay the penalty of a wrecked life and a broken heart. I don't say this to reproach you, dear ; it is only to warn you of what other men might do in a similar case. Whatever my life may be, Agnes, I shall always think kindly and tenderly of you. Darling—good-by ! ”

He gave her hand a convulsive grasp, and gazed earnestly into her face as though he were impressing every feature upon his memory for the last time.

“ Good-by ? ” she softly and falteringly said. “ Oh, Edward, not good-by ! You will come again to-morrow, will you not ? You are surely not going to leave us so soon ? Say you won't ? ”

“ Oh, no ; I'm not going away for a while, Agnes. You will see a great deal of me yet,” he returned with a faint smile. “ Only we will never say good-by again as we will to-night, dear. To-night when parting with you I shall leave behind all that life contains of joy to me, for I must cease to think of you as I have hitherto done. To-morrow, or whenever we meet again, in parting we shall simply say ‘ good-by ’ as friends.”

She was silent and very sad ; and he went on tremulously :

“ Good-by once more, my darling. Oh, Agnes, Agnes ! I never thought to part with you like this. I knew not that fate had this bitterness in store for me, or I should have wished that I had died in Denver, where not even a tear from your dear eyes would have fallen on my grave. Don't weep, dear ! It is better after all that I have found out now that you don't

love me than if it had been after our marriage. But—good-by ! ”

He clasped her hands closely, and gazed at her with God knows what passionate longing in his heart and eyes to clasp her to his breast and kiss once more the idol of his life. But he controlled this desire. She was no longer his to cherish, and therefore he had no longer the right to disclose to her his deep devotion.

“ Good-by ! ” she huskily returned, tears streaming down her pale face as she looked at their clasped hands. Then bending her head she pressed her lips to his hand, then released hers from his hold.

They had parted. With the blackness of death in his heart he had left her, and she had fallen upon her knees, crying out her unworthiness.

His “ good-by ” still rang in her ears ; and awoke in her heart the memory of that other “ good-by ” when he had left her to go forth into the world full of ambition and hope, and try to earn enough to make her his bride. God ! what misery and suffering that had both endured between that time and now ! And now too, with his return and departure the last hope that had lived in his heart was crushed and broken. But he would return again, and she would be compelled to look upon his face and speak to him without saying one word of the old days when they had been so happy, for his life was ruined, and by her.

“ But, he will get over it in time,” she reasoned, trying to sooth the reproachings of her conscience. “ Yes, he will forget me after a time and love some one worthier of him.”

When Edward had left Agnes, he went to the dining-room where he knew Louis was waiting for him. Bonnard was seated before the fire in a reverie, evidently thinking of his lady-love, for a smile lit up his face.

“ Ah, Edward, old man ! Is that you ? ” he exclaimed, as Hawley entered the room ; then, seeing how pale he was, Louis

asked in astonishment: "Why, good God, man! what ails you?"

"Nothing; nothing, I assure you; I am quite well, except for a little pain here, Louis."

And Edward pressed his hand to his heart.

"You won't explain, I see—yet I know something is wrong; but Agnes will tell me," said Louis, and he was about to leave the room to seek her, when Edward interposed:

"No, you must not speak to her now. Agnes and I thoroughly understand each other at last. The double wedding, my friend, which you a while ago said might soon take place, will never be. Agnes has ceased to love me!"

When he had begun speaking his voice was quite calm, but toward the end it faltered and broke.

"What!" exclaimed Louis, the surprise of such news almost taking away his breath. "Can this be possible?"

"It is true."

Bonnard stormed and raved in a terrible way over the part his sister had played, for he sympathized deeply with Edward. He would have gone to Agnes and given her a piece of his mind, but for his friend's interference.

"No," the poor fellow said, "you must not reproach her with what she has done. After all, it is for the best, and she is sorry enough, poor little girl! You must promise me, Louis, that you will not be harsh with her. I was not. Then why should you?"

"By heaven, Edward, you are a noble fellow!" exclaimed Louis, grasping his hand and giving it a hearty shake.

"Only human; nothing more."

"Human! No, by heaven, no! Had you more humanity and less nobleness, you would have killed her outright!" was the fierce retort.

"That is all nonsense. It does not pay to be revengeful. But now, good-night!"

"Why, where are you going?" remonstrated Louis.

"You know that your mother's house is closed since her death. It is useless going there; remain here."

"Well, I'll think of it; but I want a walk just now."

"Oh, very well; I will wait up till you return," replied Louis, and he watched him depart with a sad heart.

It was only when he was out of the house that the full force of his misery dawned upon Edward Hawley. He and Agnes seemed so utterly estranged now. Dismally musing on his unhappiness, he wandered along without caring whither he went. It was only when he found himself opposite the entrance to the bridge that he paused and wondered whether he would walk over it. The hour was late, but his brain was in that state when solitude, with noise and lights about, was what he needed. Toward the bridge he consequently turned his steps.

It was a lovely night; cold, clear, and with just enough breeze not to make it unpleasant. When Edward had reached the first tower, he paused and looked about him. He seemed to be the only one on the bridge for there was no one else in sight. He glanced at the many colored lights flashing and reflecting on the dark waves of the great river below. Then too, there was the flashing of lights of the cities back and front of him, and the stars gleaming in the deep-blue of the sky, like angel's eyes watching over the world and breathing in their calm serenity the goodness of God.

Yes, there were lights all around—below and above—but none was brighter than the light in his own heart. It burned there in pure, soft and tender memory of Agnes.

"Oh, my dear one!" he softly murmured; "you were never so precious to me as now. My life was never such a blank to me before!"

And he looked down into the dark waters below him with an aching heart.

Shuffling-footsteps attracted his attention. Turning hastily he saw a small, thin man, with a fine, intelligent face from

which a pair of gleaming black eyes stared at him in wild beseeching. Had the man been shaved and neatly attired, he might have been called good looking; but he was dirty and ragged, and his knees were knocking together. He was so greatly in need of the two things most necessary to him: whiskey and cigarettes!

"Sir," he said, coming up to Edward's side and speaking in a tone of earnest pleading, "for God's sake give me the price of a drink?"

There was something so truly pitiable in the man's condition that Edward, without a word, handed him a quarter of a dollar.

The poor fellow muttered his thanks, and was shuffling off in the direction of Brooklyn, when Edward, growing more interested in his new acquaintance, resolved to accompany him.

This he did, and they walked along side by side, conversing on various subjects, upon all of which the stranger was remarkably well posted.

When they had arrived at the Brooklyn end of the bridge, the man said he must part with his benefactor now; and from the way his eyes roamed to a saloon near by, Edward very readily conjectured the cause.

"I guess I'll join you, and have a drink myself," said Hawley good-naturedly.

"Do," chuckled his companion, his eyes alight with the prospect, no doubt, of getting a few extra glasses.

Louis Bonnard waited up for his friend's return that night, but he waited in vain. The one drink Edward had partaken of in the tramp's company was but the prelude to numberless others. Finding the man sympathetic, he opened his heart to him and related all his troubles; so drink followed drink until the poor, foolish fellow's senses completely forsook him.

CHAPTER XX.

THE SAD CALAMITY THAT BEFALLS EDWARD.

KEEPING to the promise he had made, Louis did not reproach Agnes with the hypocritical part she had played in poor Hawley's case ; at least he did not upbraid her in words, but the contempt with which he regarded her, hurt her far more than his anger could possibly have done. Then, too, how he repulsed her every effort to be agreeable ! For instance : they were seated at breakfast the morning after Edward's return, and she had offered him some hot rolls.

"I don't wish any," he had said crossly enough.

"But they are delicious, and I know you are fond of them," she went on, trying to overcome his ill-humor.

"How can you expect me to have an appetite, when the very sight of you is enough to put a saint out of temper ?"

She was too much hurt to reply for never had he spoken so angrily to her before.

Edward's failure to return worried Louis very much, and when even the second day had passed and he had not turned up, he became so anxious that he determined to begin a search at once for him. As he was wandering about the streets, puzzled what to do, an ambulance dashed past, and like most people anxious to find out what had happened, he ran at full speed after it. When he had arrived at the scene of distress, he saw to his astonishment and dismay, Edward lying upon the ground, unconscious.

"Stay a moment," he said to the surgeon, as they were about to lift Edward into the ambulance, "this gentleman is a friend of mine. I will get a cab and have him taken to my home."

And thus poor Hawley was conveyed to Louis' house, and Dr. Wayne sent for.

The doctor pronounced the case one of fever, which had been brought on by excitement, unusual excess of liquor, and want of rest.

All the while Edward was ill, Agnes nursed him incessantly. Indeed she would not even permit Estelle to attend to his wants—for that young lady with her father, had hastened to Brookly in response to a letter Louis had sent, stating all the particulars of Edward's escape from death, and his present illness. Yes, Agnes was ever near him, though it was the keenest torture to her to listen to him when he babbled of their unfortunate love affair. At such times she would clasp his hands in agony, and try to sooth his poor, wounded heart. But he resented her attempts to soothe him, and would turn his face away when she was about to touch his brow with her lips, as though even in his unconscius state, he knew that her caresses were those of pity or friendship.

With an aching heart she saw him grow paler and thinner day by day, for it seemed to her that she was to blame for his illness. She wondered if he should die, yet shrank with dread at the thought when her eyes rested upon his face. Could she have known the miserable outcome of his illness, she would have prayed most fervently for his death, for his as well as for her own sake.

But Edward did not die. He opened his eyes one morning to a state of consciousness. Alas! it was only the pitiable consciousness of one bereft of intelligence. Agnes was as usual with him.

"Dear Edward," she tenderly said, leaning over him and gazing into his eyes as they stared wonderingly up at her; "do you know me?"

He hesitated a few moments in utter bewilderment, then said:

"I have never seen you before. Who are you?"

"You are dreaming or joking, Edward!" expostulated Agnes sadly.

He shook his head and smiled faintly.

"No, I am not joking; I have never seen you before," he reiterated.

Agnes felt somehow inclined to laugh at first, but the solemn light in his eyes forbade such gaiety. And not knowing really what to do under the circumstances, she asked:

"Shall I tell Louis to come and see you?"

"Louis?" he repeated with a vacant stare.

"Yes. Perhaps you would like to see and talk to him?"

"I know no one by that name," he returned slowly.

"Oh, Edward," Agnes laughingly argued, "how can you speak so foolishly? How can you deny knowing us?"

"I am very sorry if I annoy you; but I really don't know you. What is your name?" he inquired, still with wonder in his eyes and voice. To gratify the desire she felt to see how far he would go with his jesting—for she regarded it only as that—she said very gravely:

"My name is Agnes."

"Agnes? It is a pretty name indeed. And in what place am I. Has my mother had the house fixed? Where is she?"

Greatly alarmed now by his manner, Agnes went in search of Louis, to consult him as to what was best to be done. Together they returned to the sick room.

"Edward, my dear fellow, how do you feel this morning?" was Mr. Bonnard's hearty inquiry.

"Very well, I thank you sir; but I have been ill, have I not?" the sick man replied, as though Louis were a stranger to him.

"Yes, you have been very ill, my boy. Do you know me, Edward?" Bonnard tremulously asked.

Hawley shook his head in the negative, very decidedly.

Louis was sadly puzzled. It was no use that he asked Ed-

ward whether he recognized Estelle, or even his uncle; in his perplexity, Bonnard consulted Dr. Wayne, who, after examining Edward, explained that the memory of the latter years of his life was utterly gone.

Those friends whom he failed to recognize, he very obediently called by the names they bade him; and so it came about that he called the girl whom he had once loved, "sister Agnes" and regarded her in that light. The memory of all his sorrow and disappointment was as if it had never existed. He was a boy again; noble and manly in his ways, but still a boy when he should have been a man.

Agnes made herself utterly miserable worrying over what she believed to be her fault; and the bitterest moment of all was when Edward himself sometimes detected her in tears, and sought to comfort her, although he did not know why she wept.

She did everything within her power to make his life as bright as possible—interested herself in all his boyish sports, and defended him when he was made a butt by strangers and criticising acquaintances. And he loved her in his artless way dearer than anyone else.

As he was his mother's heir, he possessed ample means; and under the influence of Agnes's pleading, Bonnard, with the consent of Mr. Richmond and Estelle, made him an inmate of his home—for Agnes had secretly determined to devote her life to him as a loving sister.

But her generous impulses put her in an equivocal position. She was anxious to do what was right, but found herself surrounded with opposing elements. For instance: Dr. Wayne objected to having Edward remain as a member of her household, saying that she would learn to love him through the pity she felt for him. And not all her associations to the contrary would make him believe otherwise. Even her great love for himself was not considered, as he affirmed she must care more

for Edward anyhow when she was so anxious to have him near her.

And thus she found herself constantly contending between two emotions—her pity for Edward and her love for Dr. Wayne.

“Yes,” Dr. Wayne had asserted in one of their conversations, “I perceive you care still for Edward. It matters little how miserable I am made through your fluctuating feelings, so he has the sunshine of your society. But I tell you I won’t stand this wretched pretense of love which is constantly torturing me with its doubts! I won’t be wheedled like a child into the belief that you love me one moment, and the next you are indifferent to me! I want your affection in its entirety or not at all!” And then when he had seen her throw back her head evidently in cold indifference to his jealousy, he had immediately begged her to pardon him and forget what he had said.

But his words were not so easily forgotten or forgiven. They stung deeply, and for a long time made her intensely miserable. Besides, she liked to make him regret what he had said, and so pretended she was angry with him. But she let her pretended anger go too far—and after trying in vain for a long time to win her pardon, Dr. Wayne at length desisted, and gradually the breach widened between them. When it was too late Agnes saw her error, but pride forbade her to explain. And so she let their affection grow colder, and the lovable and sisterly part she had meant to play toward Edward was a task, miserable indeed.

As for Dr. Wayne, he continued calling at her home, but he never spoke to her of love. One reason, to be sure, was because they were seldom alone now and therefore he had no chance; another was her coldness; and yet he knew she loved him. He could detect that in the very fact that her coldness was studied—her eyes never met his for any length of time, and the grasp of her hand had none of the firmness of former

times. But he knew she loved him, and she knew he loved her, so that while they were both miserable over their childish folly, they were also comforted with the knowledge of their affection for each other.

CHAPTER XXI.

“YOU—YOU—HUNCHBACK!”

HOWEVER little a man may care for his wife, and no matter how unworthy he himself may be of her, still he will not submit forever to her caprices. He expects her to uphold his name—at least after a manner; and to see her attending balls and theatres in the company of another man, and by her conduct generally giving the gossips something to talk about, is enough to infuriate him. Yet he is not so angry with his wife, who by the way is the most generally to blame, as with the man who pays her attentions.

Such were the state of Dr. Wayne's feelings toward his wife and Moore.

Long ago he had ceased to remonstrate with her. But his hatred and contempt for Moore grew fiercely intense. He could have thrashed him, but the smooth-tongued rascal gave him really no good cause for a quarrel. He was ever pleasant though he knew Dr. Wayne hated him cordially; and deep down in his own heart Moore returned the doctor's hatred with interest. So to revenge himself he did all in his power to widen the gap between husband and wife. It was a mean revenge to be sure, but one in thorough keeping with such an unscrupulous nature.

Moore had no desire whatever for Mrs. Wayne's love, but it had been a pleasant task to pretend that he cared for her, so he might boast to his friends of this beautiful woman's infatuation. But the climax had come at last. Moore had long been debating whether it was not more profitable to be the

husband of a wealthy, but extremely plain-looking widow whom he knew—and whose money he might appropriate—than to continue paying attentions to Mrs. Wayne—attentions which were of no consequence to him financially. His debates ended in the belief that the wealthy widow was preferable, so he proposed for her hand and was accepted.

Mrs. Wayne heard of his intended marriage through her husband, who had learned of it in this way :

Dr. Wayne and Moore had met on the street, and the latter had greeted the former with his usual smiling pretense of friendship, requesting the doctor at the same time to congratulate him.

“ But why congratulate you ? ” Wayne had asked, somewhat surprised.

“ I am about to get married.”

“ Indeed ? Who is the lady ? ”

Moore named the widow, and added, extending his hand :

“ Will you not congratulate me ? ”

Dr. Wayne brushed his hand aside and said contemptuously :

“ Well, Moore, it's about time you decided to make love to some other woman, than one who is married. Congratulate you ! No, I will not ! But I'll say this : The lady who is to marry you is making a bad bargain ; she is far too good for you ! ”

Instead of getting angry, as might have been expected of a man who had manhood enough to resent an insult, Moore only smiled blandly, as he returned :

“ My dear doctor, what an odd fellow you are to be sure. Why, my dear boy, making love to a married woman is the most sensible thing a man can do ; no fear then, when he tires of her, that she will sue him for breach of promise—see ? That's the reason young ladies feel neglected now-a-days, and married women win favor. Rather a reversing of how it should be, but a good thing for the men, and it's sur-

prising they didn't know it hundreds of years ago ; don't you think so ? ”

“ I daresay, men of your stamp always knew it,” was Dr. Wayne's sarcastic rejoinder.

“ Ha, ha, ha ! how very unamiable and disagreeable you are to-day. Really, it's a treat to come across such goody-goodys as you. But, I assure you it's a mistake to be exceptional in any one particular, my dear friend, because one only makes a laughing-stock of one's self, which isn't very agreeable you must acknowledge.”

And again his jeering laugh jarred upon the doctor's ear. Greatly enraged, and feeling how contemptible it was to pursue a woman's style of quarreling—yet having no actual cause to knock him down—which he felt like doing—Wayne abruptly left him. Hastening home, he found his wife in her sitting-room glancing over the pages of a book. She looked up languidly as he entered. Something in his eyes attracted her attention, and she waited for him to speak with her eyes resting on his face.

Dr. Wayne for perhaps the first time in his life, felt maliciously happy as he had news for his wife which would at last make her realize how foolish she had acted in caring for Moore. Also would it give him supreme satisfaction to see her vanity crushed somewhat.

“ I met Moore a short while ago,” he began, “ he tells me he is going to get married.”

He looked straight at her as he spoke to see what effect his words might have. The book she held fell from her hand upon the floor, and she half rose to her feet, gasping :

“ Married ! ”

“ Yes. Rather a surprise, isn't it ? ”

“ A very great surprise. But one cannot believe all the gossips say,” was her cold reply.

“ Oh, but he told me of it himself,” he said correctingly.

“ In that case it must be true.”

She laughed uneasily, but gave no other sign that the news pained her for picking up her book, she settled herself comfortably back in her chair.

Dr. Wayne however had no intention of letting her off so easily. He had sought her with the idea of getting some satisfaction for all she had made him suffer ; and he meant to have it, too.

“ I suppose he will cease coming her now that he is to be married ? ” he insinuatingly went on.

“ I’m sure I don’t see why. He is a very old friend of ours,” she quickly returned.

“ Pardon me. He *never* was a friend of *mine*, nor did he ever come her to see *me*.”

As this was the first time he had ever spoken thus openly of their domestic troubles, she was much surprised ; so much so, indeed, that for a few moments she could not speak. When she did, however, her face was flushed with anger.

“ Since you assert that he does not come here to see *you*, I suppose you mean to insinuate that it is *me* he visits ? ” she questioned.

“ Yes,” he composedly returned, “ I do. Can you deny it ? ”

“ No, I do not deny it, since you really want to know. He is my friend !—a very old and esteemed one.”

This she said quite calmly, but her eyes were dark and stormy.

“ Is it not a rather unusual thing for married women to have such very dear friends amongst the opposite sex ? ” he icily inquired—then quickly added, as though whatever answer she might make was of no concern to him—“ of course, whether it is or not, is no concern of mine, especially in regard to yourself ; I simply ask the question out of curiosity.”

He was standing opposite her, beside a window, the drapery of which he had slightly drawn aside, and when he was not looking at *her*, he gazed absently into the street. As he

finished speaking, he turned his eyes to the street, with a smile of contempt playing around his mouth, and waited for her to answer.

But she did not reply. His words and manner exasperated her beyond expression. His boldness in venturing to speak on a matter which had been worrying him for years, really made her like him for that very boldness, a trait he had never before shown in his character.

An almost tender light crept into her eyes as she looked at him standing there so cold and stern with that contemptuous smile on his lips. Suddenly he turned and faced her, raising his eyebrows inquiringly.

"I see you don't mean to gratify my curiosity."

"A woman does not like to have her husband continually quarrelling with her," she carelessly said, as though to imply that the conversation was at an end.

"But when have I ever quarrelled with you, unless it was when you made me the laughing stock of your male *friends*?" he hotly cried. "Was I not lenient enough to your faults at all times in other directions, until you broke my heart with your cruelty? What right had you to seek the friendship of such men as Moore, unless to gratify your love of admiration! But, mark me! the very men who have gratified your vanity will wound it—as a proof, there is Moore's intended marriage; and he was your most attentive friend and admirer!"

She had no reply to make to this unexpected onslaught for she fully realized it was all true. After waiting a moment as though he expected her to say something, he went on:

"And you have been trying to inveigle Louis Bonnard to pay you attentions. He is too sensible to become infatuated with you, however, although you are blind enough to think so. He, and Miss Richmond are engaged to be married."

"Oh, I have heard some such nonsense as that before," she laughed, "but Mr. Bonnard himself never said so, and were it true, he would have told *me*."

“You believe he is so much in love with you that it is impossible he would marry Estelle?”

“Yes,” she said tossing her head back, and gazing straight at him. “I do believe he loves me. Indeed I know he does.”

“What proof have you of that? Has he ever said that he loved you?” scornfully asked Dr. Wayne.

“You are asking questions which are of no concern of yours,” she retorted.

“Oh, but I assure you they are of very much concern to me. A man must necessarily desire to know what sort of a woman his wife really is, when she permits so many men to make love to her.”

“Mr. Bonnard *does* love me at any rate,” she said. “And were it not for you, he would make me his wife.”

“Ah, so you think I am in the way of your happiness? Well, it gives me infinite pleasure to assure you that Louis Bonnard *would not* marry *you*, if I were to drop dead this minute,” he mockingly rejoined, bowing to her.

“And I tell you he *would*!” she angrily exclaimed, rising and standing before him in all the pride and grace of her beauty. “He loves me and I love him. But *you* prevent us from being happy.”

“I’m glad I can prevent you from being happy! I’m glad of it, I tell you, for it’s some satisfaction for what you have made me suffer! But, Bonnard does *not* love you. He wouldn’t have you, even if his heart were not bound up in Estelle. I know that!”

And he took a fiendish delight in repeating, “I know that!” some half a dozen times, so that he might view to his satisfaction, the effect it had upon her.

Her face was ghastly with rage. She was trembling, and even her power of speech was gone for the time; but when she spoke, she almost maddened him:

“What you say is false!” she screamed, “He does love

me, and you only say he *does not* to torture me ! Oh, you devil ! You—you—hunchback ! ”

Hunchback ! As the word left her lips, he fell back from her with his hands pressed to his head as though she had struck him and a low, sobbing cry broke from his lips, followed by others.

She did not stay to witness the terrible anguish she had caused, but walked from the room in cold disdain. She felt no regret at the time for what she had said.

Had she tried, she could not have wounded him more deeply than by reverting to his affliction. His sensitive heart was almost broken to think that his wife, the one who should have sympathized with him was the cruelest of all human-kind.

And again and again that low, sobbing cry of torture fell from his lips. An hour later, having mastered his emotion, he left the room, a changed man. His face was calm, but full of a stern resolution. He had determined to separate from her.

Mrs. Wayne was now in a fever of doubt regarding Bonnard's affection for her. Moore's intended marriage did not worry her much, beyond humiliating her vanity somewhat. But Bonnard's affection was quite a different thing. Her passionate love for him was, if possible, deeper than ever before, and she could not bear to think that he meant to marry Estelle.

Wishing to know the truth at once, she hastily wrote the following note, and sent it to him by one of her servants.

“ My dear Louis—I am tortured with doubts of your love. Dr. Wayne tells me he knows you intend to marry Estelle Richmond. Can this be true ? Oh, come to me, and set my miserable doubts at rest by assuring me that it is not ! ”

His answer was written on the back of her own note :

“ You may expect me this evening. ”

When she read it, although to be sure, there was no assertion to that effect in its contents, she went almost wild with joy, thoroughly assured, since he had said that he would come that evening, that he still loved her.

What preparations she made for his coming ! Remembering how in their youth, he had liked to see her in a white gown, she attired herself in a soft, creamy cashmere evening-dress, trimmed plentifully with rich lace, and at her corsage she arranged a cluster of white hyacinths. Diamonds sparkled on her fingers, neck, and in her ears ; and in all her life, not once had she looked so supremely beautiful as she did that night.

She grew impatient waiting for him. At every ring of the bell, she would go out into the corridor, and looking over the balustrade see if it were he. She had given the servant orders to send him to her sitting-room when he arrived, and so she had made it look charming with a bright fire, the lamp dimly lit behind its rose-colored globe, and vases of hot-house flowers.

And thus she waited for his coming, with not even the shadow of a doubt but that he loved her, to mar her happiness.

CHAPTER XXII.

A TERRIBLE PENALTY.

As feverishly impatient as Mrs. Wayne was for Bonnard's arrival, just as feverishly did he fume over his having to go now that the crisis of their love affair was so near at hand.

It suddenly dawned upon him too that he had no right to sit in judgment on her. What was he that he should take to himself the right to crush her for the wrong she had done him ; especially when he had been saved from an unhappy life with her ? He felt half inclined to write and tell her that their

love was a mistake. He would not then be a witness to her grief. But he had said that he would visit her that evening, and so, with a sigh, he resolved to hold to his promise.

But, all thought of the revenge he would have in humiliating Mrs. Wayne gave Louis no satisfaction now. He saw only the contempt of such an action, and could heartily have kicked himself for even having harbored the thought.

In an extreme state of nervousness he entered the house and was shown up-stairs.

Harriet stood at the door of the sitting-room waiting for him as he came up and greeted him affectionately. Bonnard followed her inside, and having closed the door, turned to her and said as tenderly as he could :

“ You sent for me ? ”

“ Yes,” she returned, smiling with happiness, as she clasped one of his arms with both her hands and rested her head against his shoulder, “ I wanted to see you, Louis.”

“ I understand,” he said curtly, and although he did not repulse her caresses, he received them coldly enough. “ You have some questions to ask me ? ”

“ I only want you to assure me of your love,” she said, laying one bare, white arm around his neck, and gazing at him with her eyes full of passionate affection.

“ And supposing, Harriet—” he removed her arm from his neck, and laid his hands heavily on her shoulders, “ that I cannot do so ? What then ? ”

“ Pray, don’t joke over what is so serious,” she entreated, her eyes filling with tears. “ Don’t be cruel ! ”

“ I don’t mean to be,” he rejoined with some feeling. “ I simply wish to know.”

“ But why ? ” she argued. “ What is your reason ? ”

Bonnard hesitated and wished from the bottom of his heart that something would happen to prevent him from telling her the truth. He saw now what once he had deemed so easy a task, and even one of no little satisfaction to himself—was on

the contrary the most difficult he had ever undertaken, for her love for him was really sincere, and being tender-hearted he pitied her and hesitated, almost dreading the effect of the words he was about to utter.

"Has it ever occurred to you, Harriet," he gravely said at last, "that your love for me is a mistake? Think of how you are placing yourself in the estimation of others."

"You never spoke like this before! What has happened to change you? What has happened?" she cried, standing back a little from him, and gazing with a painfully eager gaze into his face, her own white with fear, as if half dreading what his answer would be.

"You are doing wrong, and compelling me to do wrong also, Harriet, by continuing to love me in this mad fashion, for it cannot end in anything but misery and remorse," reasoned Bonnard, a flush of shame mantling his face. She noticed it at once and spoke accordingly.

"I am doing wrong?—leading you astray?" she said bitterly. "So my love for you amounts to nothing, Mr. Bonnard? How very noble of you to tell me this."

Thus far she had spoken contemptuously, derisively; but now, as though the full depth of his words had only just penetrated her understanding, she staggered forward and laying her arms about his neck, spoke softly and tenderly, with a trace of tears in her voice:

"Oh, Louis, do you know what you are saying? You have said that you loved me. And now, do you mean to blast the happiness of my whole life? Oh, tell me that you love me still! Take this terrible pain from my heart!"

"I wish to God I could say so, my poor Harriet," he pityingly returned. "But it is useless to pretend any longer that I love you, however I may have felt toward you once. Let us bury the past, forgiving and forgetting what each has made the other suffer; and above all, let us be friends: Do you consent to this, Harriet?"

Mrs. Wayne's lips parted in her effort to speak, but no sound came from them. Her bosom heaved and she looked dejectedly at him—her hand pressed to her heart, as if to still its wild beating.

“I have been foolish of course,” pursued Bonnard with much emotion. “In seeking to gratify my heartaches of years ago, by making *you* suffer. But, I did not realize how intensely I had it in my power to do so. Had I known it, believe me, I should not have tried to wound you ! I thought only of humiliating your vanity. Oh, do believe what I say, Harriet, and try to pardon me !”

He extended his hand as he ceased speaking, and with a little moan of pain she caught it in both of hers and pressed her lips to it.

“And so,” she presently said, “you have been pretending that you cared for me, only to see me suffer? To gratify, as you yourself have said, your heartaches of years ago? As if I too, had not suffered through my own wretched folly ! But I had thought that happiness would yet be mine. Oh, Louis, is my love then of no avail? Can you not return it even with one half as much as I feel for you? Look at me ! Am I not still beautiful enough to love?”

Involuntarily his eyes swept over her superb form. The tall, graceful, rounded figure was faultless. Her face was dazzling in its beauty ; her eyes full of tenderness, and a soft flush in her cheeks. The gleaming whiteness of her partly extended arms, invited him to accept of their caresses. Yes, she was beautiful indeed, but it was a beauty which only charmed his senses. Still, he felt that did he not love Estelle, it would be a very easy matter for him to learn again to love Mrs. Wayne as he had once done.

“It must be true then,” she continued, as he did not answer her, “that you intend making Estelle Richmond your wife, since you have not denied it. But, do you think she will ever

love you as I do? Why, the silly child does not even know what love means!"

Her voice was filled with jealous rage, but Bonnard only smiled faintly as he considered that Estelle's love was pure and noble compared to this woman's half crazy passion.

Suddenly she knelt at his feet, and clasped him round the waist, lifting up her glorious face to him.

"Oh, Louis," she pleaded tearfully, "see how I am humiliating myself!—begging and praying here at your feet! Oh, take me to your heart again! Love me as you once did, my own darling!"

"Harriet, think of what you are saying! Do be reasonable," Bonnard entreated earnestly.

"Oh, I can't—I can't!" she moaned, piteously; "the strength of my passion eats into my heart and brain, and robs me of reason, yet I cannot restrain its power. I love you—I love you! With all my heart! With all my soul! I will sacrifice everything in this world only to be with you—*only* to be with you!"

"This is madness!" cried Bonnard impatiently.

"I care not what it is—only say you love me!" she pleaded.

"I *cannot*, I tell you! Why will you insist when you know I care no longer for you?" he angrily cried, disengaging himself from her embrace.

She arose and stood before him, staggering somewhat, as though her heart were utterly crushed.

"You have been very cruel to me," she said quietly enough now; "cruel, but honest; a little too honest, I think. However, it does not matter; but," and she approached very near to him—and laid her hand on his arm—"remember, that whatever ill you may hear of me in the future lies at your door. You have destroyed every womanly feeling in my heart!"

She spoke most impressively, and long afterward when he

recalled her words, he shuddered to think—"What a fatal thing is love to such natures as hers!"

"I am very, very sorry, Harriet—" he began hesitatingly, but she quickly interrupted him.

"Pray, don't apologize; it is unnecessary and distasteful. We have but to say good-by, then our acquaintanceship such as it was, will be at an end. Henceforth we shall meet as strangers. Mr. Bonnard—good-by!"

Very calm was her voice and manner as she extended her hand. But he did not take it at once. On the contrary, he came close to her and threw his arm across her shoulders with the familiarity that a brother might have used, his face quite grave and full of pity as he said:

"You surely do not mean that we are to part bad friends? Ah, do not be so cruel! I cannot bear to think that we must be as strangers henceforth. Tell me you are not angry with me!"

"It is impossible to be angry with a stranger," she coldly replied.

"Well, I'm sorry, Harriet; I had not thought you were so cold and unforgiving; but you are just, no doubt."

"Thoroughly so."

"Good-by then," he sadly said.

"Good-by!" she huskily returned.

He had walked slowly toward the door, but ere he had reached it, she had stepped hastily forward and fallen upon his breast; had drawn his face down to her own, and pressed her lips passionately and tenderly to his in a last fond caress. Then she bade him go. But as he closed the door softly after him, and her stifling sobs fell upon his ear, a sharp pang of pain smote his heart; and he thought that after all, revenge was a pitiable thing at best.

He realized now, that had he acted differently, he might have made a better woman of Mrs. Wayne. By friendship alone, since she loved him so dearly, he could have moulded her

mind to respect what he respected. But having pretended that he loved her, and as she was married, he had had no chance to mould her into a nobler character. Like the majority of people, Bonnard only realized when it was too late what he *should* have done.

As for Mrs. Wayne, when she had recovered from her first keen pang of anguish caused by her parting with Bonnard, she began to think and look forward as to what the future held for her. And as she endeavored to pierce the obscurity nothing but dark and evil prospects greeted her.

Where another woman would have tried to win her husband's forgiveness, Mrs. Wayne sought it not. On the contrary she blamed and hated him as the cause of her unhappiness. She hated him because she had married him, without considering that she had chosen him herself—hated him, because he was resentful, and most of all, she hated him because he had indicated so well what had come to pass: "The very men who have gratified your vanity by pretending to love you, are the very ones who will wound it."

She realized now how very true the words were! Alas! the boiling, raging waves of retribution were sweeping over her! How would they leave her? On a barren shore, with nothing but the throes of awful despair crushing her until her heart was broken!

Ay, this was a terrible penalty for all she had once enjoyed! The knowledge that Bonnard did not love her was as bitterest gall to her heart. And she had been weaving such tender little pictures of what their life would be when they would have come together! How often had she fancied herself sitting in a prettily arranged room—not expensively furnished, that was out of the question, because they would not be able to afford it; but just pretty enough to be cheerful to the eye as well as comfortable. And Louis would be lying on the lounge, lazily puffing at his cigar, and watching the rings of smoke as they curled upward. She wouldn't in the least mind

his looking at the smoke instead of at her, so long as he held her hand and listened while she read to him. And thus had she been foolishly indulging her fancy on a subject which had nothing but a flimsy foundation. And now her heart was crushed and bleeding. Nothing but a life of misery lay before her until death might bring release ; and then ?

“The human heart should be incapable of feeling,” she reasoned, as she sat staring into the dying fire. “The Creator erred when he made the heart susceptible of pain. It should only be an apparatus through which the blood passes to supply the system. In fact pain is a thing that should not be endured in any case in this world, or if so, why should there be a perdition where we must suffer for having sinned here ? Either there is no perdition, or else God is unjust ! for suffering here, and then there, is too much !”

She took off the pretty gown she had worn, and laid it carefully in her trunk, and placed the fading hyacinths with the two other cherished mementoes in her desk. But without looking at the little shoes and packages of letters she had kept so long, she locked the desk again with grim determination, whispering as she did so, with just a faint tremor in her voice :

“Dead and gone forever are all my dreams ; and so, I will never have need to revive any tender memories. Henceforth, I want a heart to deal *with* as I have been dealt by !”

It was midnight when she thought of going to bed. Having put out the light, she drew aside the curtains and peered into the garden below. The light streaming from a window beneath her, faintly lit up the surroundings and reflected on the dark ground the shadow of her husband standing like herself gazing without. Having stood there some minutes he finally went away, and a moment thereafter the light was turned low.

A queer laugh fell from her lips—a scornful, mocking, dev-

ilish laugh that filled the room with ghostly echoes, and caused even herself to glance about as though some evil presence were near. She had conceived the idea of telling Dr. Wayne of her conversation with Bonnard, of giving him the satisfaction of knowing how true his words were realized. He deserved to know it, and it would give her such pleasure to have him taunt her with her folly. She wanted to be made angry; she wanted some one to taunt her, and so take from her heart the maddening pain that tortured her. She wanted to learn to hate Bonnard, and she couldn't do so until someone would make her feel really angry with him—and who but Dr. Wayne was so well adapted to do this?

And thus, with this half crazy notion in her mind, she stole softly from the room to his office.

Not a sound disturbed the stillness of the house. Long ago the servants had all retired. But as she was about to knock at the office door, the sound of low, panting sobs—the more terrible because they were tearless—and interspersed occasionally with the word “hunchback,” spoken bitterly, fell upon her ear, and stayed her hand. Evidently, Dr. Wayne had not yet recovered from the suffering of their afternoon quarrel.

She drew back from the door with a feeling of almost pity stirring her heart. She forgot the mission that had brought her there in the yearning desire to comfort him.

Noiselessly she turned the knob of the door and pushing it slightly ajar, glanced in. He was seated before the fire, his face buried in his hands, and pitiable sobs still breaking from his lips. Filled with a new, sweet, womanly feeling of pity, such as she had never entertained for him before, she opened the room door wider and stole to his side. Not until she had laid her hand gently on his shoulder, and she had softly spoken his name, “Robert!” was he aware of her presence.

He started and arose hastily to his feet—a blazing light

leaped to his eyes as he saw who it was, and he demanded fiercely :

“ Well, what do you want ? ”

A pained look came into her eyes, for she wondered why he was angry when she had spoken so kindly. Then she faltered her voice full of appeal :

“ I am sorry for what I said this afternoon. Won't you forgive me, Robert ? ”

“ Forgive you ! ” he wrathfully exclaimed. “ No, though my soul were doomed for it ! ”

“ But I'm sorry for what I said,” she protested pleadingly.

“ What you have said is spoken and cannot be recalled ! ” he cried. “ I would be obliged if you would leave me ; I do not care to listen to your expressions of grief ! ”

“ You refuse to forgive me then ? ” she wistfully asked ; and as the question passed her lips, it suddenly dawned upon her all she might lose or gain according to what his answer would be. Now that Bonnard was false, and when her infatuation for him had cooled, she and the doctor might, from the experience of nearly eleven years of suffering finally become attached to each other. Such might have been the case had Dr. Wayne forgiven and taken her to his heart again. But such, however, was not to be.

“ Yes,” he returned, “ I do refuse to forgive you, madam ! Ah, God ! had you come to me years ago and spoken thus, I should gladly have said ‘ yes ’ and loved you dearer than before ! But all these long years, during which you have wrung my heart with suffering—my *heart* mind, not my *vanity*—well, all this suffering has crushed out every atom of love I ever had for you ! It only remains now for us to separate, and so end what has been a miserable bondage ever since it was made. In a short time I shall relieve you forever of my presence. You understand ? Now, madam, I have the pleasure of wishing you good-night ! Nothing you can say or do will alter my determination in the least. Good-night ! ”

He bowed to her, and then walked toward the door, where he stood holding it open, waiting for her to pass out. She gave him one last beseeching look, but his face remained obstinately cold and unrelenting, and he permitted her to leave without saying one word.

The door was closed softly behind her, and the bolt shot into its socket.

A mist arose in her eyes. She realized with a bitter pang that henceforth they were utterly estranged ; but bitterest of all was the sad refrain : Oh, how different it might have been !

She was a wiser woman at last ; but of what avail was it now ? Alas ! all the wisdom in the world could not redeem the damage wrought by her folly in the past. It had all come too late—too late !

CHAPTER XXIII.

A TREACHEROUS FRIEND.

“WELL, upon my word, I wonder what ails Louis for the past week ?” wonderingly said Agnes Bonnard to herself at the breakfast table one morning, as she watched her brother leaving the house. “Here I have been exerting myself in every way to please him, yet he eats nothing, scowls as though something terrible had happened, and altogether is as disagreeable as he can be. All too, ever since he received that letter from Mrs. Wayne—for I’m sure it was from Mrs. Wayne, because Robert would never have been so mysterious. Ah, well ! Estelle shall know nothing about it ! Poor little girl, she would cry herself sick if she thought Louis loved Mrs. Wayne. I declare it’s a shame ! Men all want perfection in women, yet they are not so particular as to their own lack of it. And more’s the pity too !”

And as she ceased speaking a sad light gradually crept into Agnes’s eyes. But her thoughts were suddenly brought to a

pause as the door-bell rang. Peeping through the curtains, she saw Dr. Wayne's carriage standing in front of the house, and her heart fluttered wildly. Then going quickly into the hallway she listened as the servant opened the door.

"Is Mr. Bonnard in?" asked the grave, deep voice of Wayne.

No, but Miss Agnes was, the girl returned.

A minute later Agnes was up-stairs, just as the servant was about to usher Dr. Wayne into the parlor.

"Louis is not at home. Did you wish to see him about anything important?" Agnes asked, when they had entered the room and were alone.

Her voice was very tender, for the pain and suffering in his face were not lost to her eyes, and awoke her deepest sympathy and love for him.

"It is *you* I wanted to see, dearest," he constrainedly returned, retaining her hand as she extended it to him. "I am glad your brother is not in, for I want to speak very seriously. But tell me first that you forgive me for the foolish jealousy I harbored in poor Edward's case.

"Yes, yes," she replied, almost in tears, "but you were very, very cruel."

"Never mind—it shall not happen again, pet," he answered, gently patting her cheek. "Now let us forget it, and speak of something more important. Come, let us sit here," and he drew her toward a sofa.

"In a few weeks, Agnes," he began with gentle gravity, "I will have settled all my business affairs, for I am going to leave this country. In some other land I shall seek to forget the miseries I have suffered in this. But I want a companion—someone who will love and comfort me for the remainder of my life. Will you be that companion, Agnes?"

He turned his eyes full on her face in the desire to see the effect of his words. Her face grew white and sad, and she clutched his hand convulsively as she gasped in a stifled voice :

"You do not mean this, Robert?"

He nodded assent, but still she continued to look at him incredulously.

"Yes, my darling, it is all true," he went on. "The time has at last come for you to prove that you love me. Do you consent to go with me, dear?"

"Oh, no, no, no!" broke from her trembling lips, as she put his hands aside. "You do not realize what you are asking of me!"

"I am asking you to share my future—to be happy in each other's love," he returned emphatically.

"But there can be no happiness without marriage," she remonstrated with equal emphasis.

He turned aside with a motion of impatience and anger.

"That's right," he said, "bring all your obstinate arguments into play. Upon my word, I feel inclined to take my leave now, rather than listen to you. But—Agnes, you don't mean to let me go alone, do you? Oh, dearest, think of my deep love for you, and tell me you will accompany me!"

"I cannot—I cannot!" she wailed; and then nestling close to him, she rested her head against his shoulder, and lifted her dark, eloquent eyes, burning with tender beseeching to his, as she said: "But you won't go—you won't leave me, will you?"

Dr. Wayne sighed. He drew her to his breast and laid his lips tenderly to her brow, and for a few minutes neither spoke. At length, however, Wayne broke the silence.

"My dear, little Agnes," he gently said, looking down into her tear-dimmed eyes, and caressing her cheek with his hand, "our love cannot go on forever thus. We are both miserable, whereas, we would be happy were we together. If I remain longer with my wife, I shall go mad! but with *you*—oh, my little comforter, life would be a very paradise!"

"Yes, it would be so to me too," she panted; "but it cannot be—it cannot be!"

“Do you mean me to understand that you refuse? . . . I am not joking, Agnes. This is too serious a matter to joke upon. I have firmly resolved to leave this country within two weeks, so that your refusal to accompany me will not change my plans. But you won’t refuse, Agnes?”

And Wayne softly touched the quivering lips with his own. She tried to extricate herself from his hold, but finally yielded, and let her head rest again upon his shoulder—whereat, Dr. Wayne kissed her again, and exultantly exclaimed:

“At last, my darling, you are indeed my own!”

“No, no!” she exclaimed, starting up, “I do not consent! I will never consent! Oh, I’d rather die first! I’d rather suffer the greatest tortures that God or man could inflict, than be your mistress!”

She broke from him, and walked unsteadily toward the fireplace. Raising her arms she laid them on the mantel, and resting her head on them, looked up at the portrait of her father where it hung above her. It seemed to her as she looked, that the loving eyes in the picture were entreating her to do right—so she smiled bravely in return, determined to do so at all costs.

Dr. Wayne watched her with a pained expression. Although he could not see her face, he knew she was undergoing a terrible struggle, and he loved her all the more for it, though he did wish that she would accede to his plans.

He saw the slender, girlish figure convulsed with great, tearless sobs, yet he made no attempt to comfort her. He knew not what to say or do. The last word she had spoken distressed him profoundly. Strangely enough he had never associated her in his thoughts even in that respect. The very sound of the word breathed of all that was loathsome, whereas, the purity of Agnes’s heart and soul had been the very means of awakening his mad love for her, and his natural desire to claim her as his own loving companion. And now, was the sweet hope which he had cherished all along, to be blasted?

He sprang to his feet at the mere thought, and with his hands pressed to his temples as though his brain were bursting, walked rapidly up and down the room.

Agnes turned and looked at him, and thinking he was angry with her, she stepped forward with the intention of entreating him to think kindlier of her. As she stood before him, her earnest, loving face alight with a sweet smile, he caught her to him in a passionate embrace joyously exclaiming, for he believed she wished him to understand that she consented to his wishes: "My darling—my darling!"

Ere she could say one word to contradict his belief, the door opened and her brother entered the room.

But for this interruption all might have gone well. Agnes would have reasoned with Wayne, and gradually perhaps have brought him to think as she did—or she could at the very least refuse to agree with him, and so end entirely all the madness of their affection—as much as never seeing each other again could end such passionate love.

Agnes and Dr. Wayne turned hastily as Louis entered the room, and a cry of despair and misery fell from the girl's lips. But Wayne, although his face grew white, remained silent. He threw back his head, and with his arm protectingly thrown across Agnes's shoulder, returned the surprised and angry glare of Louis, boldly and defiantly.

"Well, sir," thundered Bonnard, when he had regained his power of speech, "what is the meaning of this?"

"It means," slowly and distinctly returned the doctor, as he drew Agnes closer to him, "that your sister and I love each other."

"What! Can this be true? Can *you*, whom I have loved and trusted as a brother and friend, have taken advantage and played such a treacherous part as this? Oh, scoundrel!—traitor!"

And Bonnard sprang forward, his eyes blazing and his hands clenched to strike the man against whom his rage was at white

heat. But with a calmness and strength born from the depth of her despair, Agnes stepped between them.

"Listen to me," she said quietly and even commandingly turning to her brother, the expression of whose eyes grew sterner and angrier. "It is quite true that Dr. Wayne and I love each other, but he has never by word or act treated me otherwise than as a gentleman would. I am really as much, yes, and more to blame, for—"

"Wayne, what sort of a man are you to let *her* plead for you?" fiercely and scornfully demanded Bonnard, thrusting his sister aside, and with folded arms surveying the doctor with a sneering glance.

"I have no desire to have Agnes intercede for me," hotly retorted Wayne. "Let us come to an understanding at once, if you please—I am ready to answer whatever you may wish to know."

"Well, then, have you defiled her fair fame?" demanded Louis.

"Oh, no, no!" wailed Agnes; but her brother bade her keep silent. Then turning to Wayne again, he repeated his question.

"I have *not*!" the doctor proudly answered. "I love her too well."

"To what extent?"

"To the extent that I have asked her to elope with me."

"What!" cried Bonnard, "elope with you?"

"That is what I said," was the calm reply.

For a minute, Bonnard could not credit his senses. The audacity with which Dr. Wayne answered his questions not only surprised, but awakened his admiration for the truthful way in which Wayne spoke.

"What," he at length said, "was her answer to that proposal?"

"You hear, Agnes?" said Dr. Wayne turning to her. "What is your answer?"

"It is—*no*!" she faltered, lifting her dark, sad eyes to his face.

"Agnes, oh Agnes!" he moaned in a broken voice.

"Now, Dr. Wayne," interposed Louis sternly, "you will oblige me by leaving this house—and at once. And remember, hereafter you are never to cross its threshold. As for my sister, I will take good care that you do not speak to her again!"

Dr. Wayne bowed coldly. He picked up his hat, and then glanced toward Agnes who was seated with her face in her hands softly weeping. Wayne made a step toward her, but Louis caught hold of his arm, and pointed angrily toward the door.

Without one movement of resistance, or word of resentment, the doctor left the room.

In spite of the harshness of Bonnard's treatment Dr. Wayne was not angry with him. He knew that he himself would have acted similarly if in Bonnard's place; but, of course, it was hard—very hard to bear. And poor little Agnes, how much harder it was for her! Her brother would never cease tormenting her; but that would only be for a short time—two weeks at most—when he would take her away for, of course, she did not mean it when she had said "*no*" before her brother.

Thus reasoning a smile lit the doctor's face, and he proceeded to call on his patients.

Meanwhile, Agnes and her brother were talking the matter over.

"I never thought you could be so hypocritical and shameless, Agnes," Louis stormed when Dr. Wayne had gone. "So this is your reason for refusing to keep your promise to Edward? Oh, shame, shame!"

She did not reply, but her tears flowed the faster.

"Everyone has regarded you as the soul of all that was good, true, and pure," he went on, "father had especially,

and now—oh, I thank God that he is not alive to witness the fall of his idol, for he loved you as such, believing you were worthy of his affection!”

“Oh, hush, hush!” she entreated, “I have done no wrong; I don’t intend to do any! It is cruel of you to torment me! My father would not have spoken to me so!—no, he would not!”

“Father always was too easy with you, and this is what comes of it. Well, I shall know better than to trust you again. Henceforth I will see that you do not speak to Wayne; and if he makes any attempt to see you in future, I’ll—I’ll fix him!”

Bonnard shook his clenched hand angrily. Then giving an extra emphasis to his rage in good, round terms of invective he left the room, banging the door after him.

Agnes was alone—alone now to reflect over the misery that enveloped her—alone to worry and try to pierce the blackness of her utter despair. She was never to see Dr. Wayne more—never to hear him speak, or even to clasp his kind hand again. In two short weeks, he would be far away, and in all the remaining years of her life she would have only the memory of one short year of happiness to look back upon.

Poor Agnes felt as though she had committed some great crime, for which nothing was left but to suffer the penalty.

Naught but suffering and reproach, remained for her now she reflected. But as she looked at the portrait of her loving, kind old father, and thought how differently he would have acted, her heart rebelled within her. *He*, understanding her so well, would have taken her to his breast, and soothed her grief, pain, and disappointment with a sternness that was pity, love, and gentleness itself; with a justness too that was sweetest advice!

The more she thought over this the more it grieved her. Yet she sat all day motionless, profoundly meditating over her sad lot. The servant came and told her that dinner was

ready, but she refused both to go down for it, or to have it brought to her. Friends arrived, but she would not see them, and even poor Edward was denied admittance to her presence when he came to ask her to go for a walk with him.

Altogether it was a miserable and gloomy day for her, though the sun shone brightly and the clear, crisp air was exhilarating.

When she looked at herself that night in her mirror, her face seemed as though it had undergone the change of at least twenty years, so haggard and pale had it become. She smiled wearily as she retired, thinking, she would care no longer as to how she looked.

CHAPTER XXIV.

AGNES'S DECISION.

LOUIS BONNARD was bitterly angry with his sister, and he spared no pains to conceal that fact. On the contrary he took every possible occasion to taunt and provoke her. And poor Agnes felt as though she never desired to look upon human being again—and thought how peaceful it would indeed be to be either dead, or in some wilderness entirely alone.

The first week passed and half of the second, yet not once had Wayne or Agnes seen each other. But one night Agnes gained her brother's consent to attend church. As Louis had some business to see to, he could not accompany her; so having no fear that she would meet Dr. Wayne accidentally at night, he told her she might go alone. But Wayne had calculated on this very chance. Aware that she attended church pretty regularly, he had waited for her outside. When they met, their hearts were so full of gladness they could hardly speak. He drew her aside, and entering his carriage, they drove slowly about for an hour—the duration of church service—discussing what their future was to be.

"Remember, Agnes," Wayne said, "I am not going away for one or two or even twenty years, but forever. Now, darling, why will you persist in making us both unhappy by your obstinacy? What need we care what the world may say? People are not apt to consider what we think of their doings, then why should we be influenced by their opinions? Come, darling, say you'll go with me."

He put his arm very gently around her, and drew her close to him. There was a smile in his gray eyes as well as on his lips that seemed to say: "I know you mean to say 'yes' but you want to be coaxed."

But having intuitively interpreted his meaning Agnes resolutely drew away from him, and declared most positively that she meant to do right. Dr. Wayne immediately became grave.

"Then you don't love me," he declared.

"And you," she returned, "don't love *me*, or you would not think of leaving me."

"Oh, come, come, Agnes," he impatiently interrupted, "do be reasonable! But seriously, darling," he added more gently, "I must leave this country! Life here is hateful to me, and a change of scene would be beneficial—the best thing for me, in fact. But you must go with me! Now, don't shake your head; I tell you, you *must*! Besides, darling, you couldn't get along without me—of that I am quite sure. Why, my poor, little girl, even the short time we have been separated, has made a most noticeable change in you. Think of what you would suffer were the time *forever*."

Forever! the word rang dismally in her ears. A sharp twinge of pain convulsed her heart.

"Oh, I'm so miserable!" she sobbed, burying her face on his breast. "I wish I could die! oh, I wish I could die, and be at rest!"

"No, not die, my poor dear, only to be with me," tenderly said Dr. Wayne. "We would be so happy, dearest. What pleasure it would be to come home to you after attending to

my patients, and what happy hours we would spend reading and talking.

And," he went on, leaning over her so close that his breath warmed her cheek, "we would never quarrel, my darling; no, we would not, I assure you. People who love and understand each other don't quarrel."

A flickering smile passed over Agnes's face, and she shook her head in disbelief.

"I am sure we would be very happy, and I know we wouldn't quarrel," he positively affirmed, "because, when I saw the possibility of one arising, I should become apparently deaf and dumb on the moment. So you see there would be no chance of quarrels between us. Wouldn't that be delightful?"

"I don't think I should like you to be quite so good. I would rather that you were master," she smilingly returned, laying her arms round his neck. "But I am sure I would be very happy with you, I know I would," she gravely added.

"Then you really mean to go with me?" he asked joyously, putting a hand on each side of her face and gazing lovingly into her eyes. She smiled assuringly.

"I knew it would come to this, darling—felt sure that you must in time yield to my love. But I am sorry your brother has found out about it. However we will soon end all your unhappiness."

She made no response, and seemed so sad that Wayne asked quickly with a sigh of pain:

"Are you sure you don't regret what you have promised?"

"I don't know what else to do; I am miserable at home, and I love you—I love you dearly!" she returned, with a pitiful break in her voice.

He clasped her closer, and pressed a kiss of passionate love on her trembling lips.

After a long silence, Agnes disengaged herself from his embrace, and asked with deep concern:

"Have you made all your arrangements? Have you provided for Mrs. Wayne?"

"Yes," he returned, "I have placed everything in the hands of an excellent lawyer, who will attend to it. Harriet will be well provided for, do not fear."

"And—and when," she faltered shyly, "do you intend to go away?"

"In two days, Agnes; but, why do you look so sad, dear? *We* are not going to part."

"I was thinking that I shall never see home again."

And although she tried bravely to restrain them, the tears would come.

"I am a brute not to consider what you are renouncing for me, but I will be all the more loving and kind to you," Wayne assured her.

"Dear Robert, I know you will. You are always loving and kind," she sweetly returned.

"You will remain true to your promise?"

"Yes."

"Then as this is Sunday, you must meet me Tuesday night, as we start for our voyage on Wednesday. Can you arrange it so, Agnes?"

"Yes," was her determined reply, but what time must I meet you and where?"

He mentioned the street and added: "What time would be best?"

"Midnight."

"Let it be so then," he rejoined. "And now, I suppose I must let you go, Agnes, or your brother will suspect something if you are longer in returning home than usual."

As Agnes acquiesced, he directed the coachman where to stop.

When she got home, Agnes learned that her brother had not yet returned. She was quite thankful, as she was still nervous

over her chat with Dr. Wayne. In the sitting-room she found Edward busily employed, sketching a child's head.

He looked up as she entered, and asked her to criticise his work. Having done so, and passed a few pleasant words with him, she finally seated herself before the fire and sank into deep thought. Her reflections were so sad that very soon the tears began to roll down her cheeks. She had forgotten that Edward was in the room, and therefore was somewhat startled when he came to her side, and taking her hands in a warm, tender clasp, asked :

“Dear sister, why are you so sad of late, and why is Louis so cross to you?”

“I cannot tell you, but I am very miserable. I shall die if things don't change soon,” she returned.

“I wish you would confide in me, Agnes. I am sure I could help you,” Edward argued.

“No one can help me. But you would like to see me happy, wouldn't you, Edward?” she asked, her cheeks flushing and paling with nervousness.

“Indeed I would.”

“And—and would it grieve you very much were I to go away, never to return?”

“Oh, Agnes, I could never get along without you!” the poor fellow cried, and sinking down on the floor, he buried his face in her lap.

His grief was very comforting just then; it was sweet to know that *he* at least would grieve when she was gone. But his grief would not last. It would not be the grief of a disappointed man, for his hope of happiness no longer lay in the desire of having her for his wife. Such was not within the range of his now smitten mind. But as the dear, loving companion and sister, whose one thought had always been to please and cheer him, so would he grieve for her—and yet in time, he would entirely forget her. Thus Agnes reasoned, and although a spasm of pain attested the sorrow of such a thought, still she

was womanly and kind enough to appreciate his grief—such as it was—to the fullest extent, and to try and reconcile him to the fact of her going.

“Edward,” she gently urged, “surely, you would rather have me go if doing so would make me happier—would you not?”

“Would it really make you happier?” he asked, looking up wonderingly. “Can going away, and leaving the old home, and Louis and me, and all your friends, really make you happy?”

The question almost maddened her. She was so overcome with emotion that she could not answer him.

“And,” he went on reproachfully, “you speak of never coming back. Oh, Agnes, how can you be so heartless! Surely you don’t care very much, or you could not so easily renounce us all, for some mythical happiness which may never be realized.”

“Stop!” she commanded almost sternly, “not another word! You must not judge of what you know nothing! Don’t you think I am conscious of all I am going to sacrifice? Never to see the old home again where I passed so many happy, happy years? Here, the sweet mother I never knew, passed away when she gave me to the world. I have grown up in the path of goodness and truth, or striven to, because I fancied I heard her advising me so. In this very chair too, my dear father used to sit while I knelt at his feet to say my infant prayer, or listen while he related some simple story full of nobleness, purity, and love, until my whole heart and soul burned with the desire to be like the picture he drew. He used to love and comfort me so when I was unhappy, but he is gone now, and I am miserable, for no one understands me, except——”

Her voice broke, and a low moan of anguish fell from her lips. When she had become somewhat calmer, she begged Edward not to tell anyone of their conversation, and as he

promised, she knew she could trust him. Then, saying she was very tired, she arose to go, but when she reached the door, she came back, and laying her hands on Edward's shoulder, said :

"You have no objection to my going away *now*, have you Edward?"

"You ought to know best, Aggie," he gently returned.

"Say you hope I will be happy," she pleaded.

"I do hope so ; but, oh, Aggie, I trust you will not go."

She was silent a few moments, then replied :

"If ever people say anything bad about me, will *you* remember that I always tried to do what was right, and that I never would have gone away only I am so unhappy here?"

"You always do what is right, Agnes," he gently returned. She shook her head sadly.

"But tell me you will think kindly of me in any event?" she huskily said.

"I will indeed," he assured her, "and love you too, my sister!"

"You are so good," she said, gratefully pressing his hands.

Five minutes later she was in her own room, weeping, and moaning in a heartbroken way.

"Oh, why," she reasoned, "was I ever born? Or why, having been born, should I be cursed with such a passionate nature! Oh, father, father, if you were only here to comfort me!"

Although she had pleaded weariness as her excuse for retiring, it was long past midnight ere she went to bed. Her brain was busy weaving plans of what the future would be, while at the same time she was worrying over her coming departure from the home she had never been away from even for a week.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE ELOPEMENT.

TUESDAY morning dawned dull, dark and cloudy; and though it did not rain during the day, there was every indication of the setting in of a violent storm.

As evening advanced the wind grew stronger, the clouds thicker and blacker, until finally the rain came down in torrents.

With a dull, aching heart, Agnes Bonnard stared out into the dark, tempestuous night, and shivered as she saw that the storm gave no promise of abating.

It would have been some consolation were it a clear night, while now—was the storm an omen of what her future was to be?

She had packed everything she intended to take with her—not very much, but still enough to fill a small valise—a change of clothing, her toilet articles, and several handkerchiefs. Having done this, she had overlooked a great number of letters and other treasured things.

She picked up one article after another and placed them in different piles. To the right she put the things she meant to take along—to the left was thrown what she no longer would use.

The first article she selected was a small, gilt-edged bible with a silver clasp. Decidedly that must go with her. It had been treasured for so many, many years now, that she could not bear to part with it; beside it was a gift from her father and therefore was very dear. She threw aside many letters from old friends—nearly all of whom had somehow or other broken friendship with her. She sighed as she thought how she had

cherished these same friends, had helped many of them, and yet when she was no longer of any use, how quickly the majority had forgotten her. But one friend had remained true—had understood and loved her. The photograph of this one slipped from between the leaves of a little book and fell into her lap. It was the picture of a grave, intellectual-looking woman of middle age. On the back of the card was written in firm, delicate handwriting: “Sincerely your friend,” and beneath was inscribed the name of the writer. Also on the fly-leaf of the book was written in the same handwriting: “Presented to Agnes Bonnard, from her teacher,” then followed the name and date.

Agnes tenderly fondled this relic of her school-days and remembered with pride how she had worked for it for six long months. She carefully replaced the picture between the leaves of the book and a tear rolled down her cheek as she reflected that this dear friend who had instructed and formed her character to a great extent, she would never see again. She laid the little volume beside her bible. Then followed a collection of all her jewelery—and portraits of her father, brother, and Edward which she added to what she had already selected.

After much thought she decided to destroy Edward’s letters, believing it best to do away with all that had been so sadly connected with him.

Having completed her task she spent the evening with her brother and Edward in the cosy little sitting-room. At exactly nine o’clock, however, she arose to retire. Her voice was scarcely above a whisper as she bade them “good-night.”

They returned it wonderingly, for her cheeks were burning and her eyes tear-dimmed.

As she left them a throb of intense pain and misery shot through her heart.

She hastened to her room, and having lit the lamp, procured writing materials and paper from her desk and seated herself; she must write and bid her brother and Edward fare-

well; but although she only wished to say a few words, she began her note half a dozen times at least, and as often tore it to pieces. It was therefore almost eleven o'clock when she had completed it to suit her.

"Ten minutes of eleven," she murmured in affright, "and they have not yet retired. Oh, what shall I do? What shall I do if they are not asleep by the time I must go?"

And this thought preyed so upon her mind, that she had hardly spirit enough left to dress. At length, however, about quarter past eleven, the welcome sound of their footsteps coming up-stairs, greeted her ear. Hastily, she turned down the light so that they would not see it through the keyhole or under the doorway. As they passed her door, she heard her brother say:

"Agnes must have had a head-ache; she didn't look well to-night."

"I think so, too," returned Edward. "She went to bed very early."

Not until they had said "good-night" as they separated at the end of the passage to go to their different rooms, did she breathe freely.

In a little while thereafter she was ready to go, but as she heard her brother moving about, (he occupied the room next to hers) she did not dare move. Even while dressing she had to be most careful not to make a noise for fear he would hear her.

Anxiously she watched the clock and listened. It was now a quarter of twelve and Louis was still awake. She tried to think and wondered if he would care very much about her going away; it was hard to believe that he would not, but she resolutely refused to think that he would. Of course he would be angry, yes, furiously angry, but in a few months, or more likely, a few weeks, he would regard her as dead and Estelle would occupy his every thought. Yes, that would be

it—he would marry Estelle, and she would be looked upon as dead!

She choked back a sob, and as everything had grown perfectly still, she walked to the window, and drawing aside the curtain looked out. What a dark, stormy night it was! The rain was still coming down in torrents, the wind too was wild and mournful, and as it swept against the quaint-looking trees and waved their branches toward the house, it seemed to Agnes as if a hundred arms were motioning her to remain. She shrank back with a shudder of superstitious terror.

The clock just then struck twelve, but though she was late, she knelt down beside the bed and whispered a prayer for the happiness of those she was leaving.

She laid her burning face and hands for a few moments on the cool casing of the pillows, and almost wished that she was going to bed instead of out into the darkness and storm and wet.

But she had no time to delay now. So, hastily arising, she put on her long, dark cloak, and a hat that had a thick veil arranged about it, which she could use in case of necessity. It took but a few moments more to slip on her rubbers and blow out the light. Carefully opening the door of her room, she listened—then with her valise gripped tightly in one hand, she slipped quietly out closing the door behind her. Everything was dark and silent, but as her rubbers prevented her steps from being heard, and as she knew the surroundings perfectly, all went well until she reached the foot of the stairs, when suddenly something rubbed against her foot. For a moment she nearly fainted with fear. Her heart almost ceased beating, and then went thumping wildly in relief, as an entreating “me—aw,” accompanied with another rub against her foot, revealed the cause of her alarm. It was only a stray cat that had sought refuge in the house from the storm.

Pausing a moment to pat the poor animal’s head, Agnes went forward to the hall door. Softly she slipped back the

bolts and latch, and opened it. A gust of wind and rain blew in upon her and made her shiver. Must she go out into that terrible storm? She reflected a moment. No, it was too late to linger now. Robert would be waiting for her, wondering at her delay. She must press out at all hazards, so closing the door, she gathered up her skirts and stepped bravely forward.

The click of the gate as she opened and closed it, made quite a noise. But the sound was drowned in the roar of wind and rain. She cast one last look at the old home, a look full of sadness and tenderness—yes, and even of regret. Not until now, when she realized that already she was forever estranged from that dear home, did the full force of her loss dawn upon her.

Out in the pouring rain, with her heart almost bursting with grief, and her mind full of uncertainty as to the future—though she loved Wayne tenderly—a longing desire came to poor Agnes to be back once more in her cozy little room. It was a longing mostly the result of physical discomfort; and the reflection that it was now an impossibility to return almost maddened her. In her anguish she sped away from the spot—on through the darkness and storm, like one bereft of her senses.

Not until she arrived at the place where Wayne had agreed to meet her did Agnes cease running. But what was her surprise, even chagrin to discover that he was not there. She wrung her hands in silent agony and wondered and dreaded what his failure to appear meant.

Thus thinking, Agnes crouched against the door of one of the houses to shield herself as much as possible from the fury of the storm.

In the meantime, Dr. Wayne had been almost similarly engaged until nearly twelve o'clock, as Agnes had been before leaving home. Ere he shut himself up in his office he gave his coachman the following instructions.

“Now, recollect, Joe—tell the girl to say I am not at home—mind to all callers—and have the carriage at the door at exactly ten minutes to twelve. You will then drive to a place I shall name, after which you will follow later instructions. Now, mind! Be smart about what you are to do!”

“Yes, sir,” Joe had returned with a surprised stare, and then had quietly gone about his business, wondering if his master was not a little bit off.

“It’s no use being there before twelve, as Agnes will not come until then on account of the storm,” Wayne soliloquized.

As he had made all his arrangements, Dr. Wayne seated himself at his desk, and having written to his lawyer, he proceeded to write to Mrs. Wayne. His letter to her read:

“MADAM;—You have expressed the wish that you would you were freed from your marriage, and I am obliging enough to annul what has been a most disagreeable bondage to us both. If you desire to sue for a divorce, pray, do so; I shall not interfere. Henceforth my life shall be lived in a land far from here—away from all the miseries of the past, for the happiness I shall realize in the love of one who honestly returns my affection.

“I have provided for your future through Lawyer ———, and from him you can receive your income quarterly or in any way you desire.

“Good-by! Now that you are free, you will perhaps give me credit and thank me in your heart for having done one kind act at least. Hoping you will now be satisfied I sign myself for the last time:

“Your husband,

“ROBERT WAYNE.”

The note was curt, satirical and reproachful, and Wayne’s feelings corresponded with the way in which he wrote. After reading it over once or twice with a grim smile, he enclosed it in an envelope and addressed it. At exactly ten minutes of twelve he opened the house door. The carriage was waiting, and Wayne sprang quickly in, after giving Joe his directions, and in another minute, it was driven rapidly from the spot.

Dr. Wayne glanced back as the vehicle started, but unlike Agnes, feeling regret at leaving his old home, he was joyous.

“Good-by, to misery forever!” he almost shouted in his glee.

In five minutes the carriage stopped and he sprang out. Simultaneously, Agnes, relieved of her anxiety, came forward shivering and wet from her poor place of shelter, to meet him.

“What delayed you?” she asked somewhat reproachfully, clasping his hand. “I thought you were to have been here at twelve exactly?”

“It is only that, now,” he returned, as he helped her into the vehicle, sprang in after her, and said to Joe ere he closed the door: “New York, ——— Hotel.”

“It must be half-past twelve as it was after twelve when I left home, and I have been waiting such a long time,” she remonstrated as the carriage started.

“My poor dear!” he returned pityingly. “But really, Agnes, it is only twelve. Look, if you discredit my word!” And he drew forth his watch. Sure enough the hands were both almost on the mark of twelve.

“Well!” said Agnes, then suddenly broke into a faint laugh.

Dr. Wayne, somewhat surprised, demanded the cause.

“In the excitement and misery of leaving home,” she gravely replied, “I forgot that I had made the clock half an hour fast, so as to get the boys to bed and asleep before I ventured out.”

As Wayne looked at Agnes’s face, as she leaned against the cushions of the carriage, he could see it was sad and quivering. He longed to comfort and caress her, but something in her manner, as she sat so still and sorrowful, forbade him to even speak to her.

He endeavored to get interested in the swift passing street, lamps, and houses, but could not, so his gaze wandered back

again to Agnes's face. To his great distress, he saw the tears rolling down her cheeks. Unable to witness this without trying to comfort her, he clasped her hands warmly, and whispered tenderly:

"Be brave, darling."

"You must think me very childish and foolish," she said between her sobs, "but, oh, you don't know how this all makes my heart ache. You don't know what misery it is, when after trying to do right, and having been proud of having done so, one suddenly yields up all one's high principles!"

"I know—thoroughly understand you, dear Agnes, and love you the more for your grief in parting from those with whom you have spent your life. You do not seem to understand, however, that my love for you is the love of a man who seeks a chaste, loving woman for all time."

And speaking thus, he drew the slender figure close to him. But she struggled out of his arms in an instant, and said sadly:

"It is kind of you to speak thus, but the fact remains nevertheless. Remember that I loved you with my whole heart when I consented to this, as I shall love you all my life! And oh, Robert, if you don't always love me, I shall die—I know I shall!"

She nestled close to him again, weeping bitterly; and Wayne pillowed the poor, aching, little head on his breast, and soothed her with the gentleness he would have shown to an infant. His sight was blurred with tears as he endeavored to comfort her—and to think that this dear little woman loved him better than her own life!

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE DAY AFTER.

THE morning following Agnes's elopement, her brother and Edward made their usual appearance at eight o'clock in the dining-room, and were greatly surprised to find that she had not yet been down.

Remembering how she looked the night before, Louis concluded she might be too ill to leave her room. Accordingly he said he would go up and see if such were the case. But as he left the dining-room Edward muttered:

"I know she has gone; something seems to tell me so. Oh, Agnes! dear sister! why did you leave me?"

And the poor fellow, quite overcome with his emotions, sank back upon a chair and buried his face in his hands. Still some hope lingered in his simple heart. He listened eagerly as Louis knocked repeatedly at the door of Agnes's room. But unable longer to restrain his suspense, and wondering at the strange silence that reigned throughout the house, Edward determined to investigate personally.

He went up-stairs.

The door of Agnes's chamber stood ajar. Knocking softly, and receiving no answer, he entered the room. The sunlight was streaming gayly in through the blue and white curtains, but although conscious of the pretty effect it had, his eyes were instantly turned to where Bonnard sat in an arm-chair, with one hand to his breast, while the other grasped the letter Agnes had addressed to him.

Louis looked up as Edward came in, but his eyes revealed nothing. It seemed as though he were completely stunned. After passing his hand slowly and vaguely across his forehead several times, he laughed in a foolish sort of way, and then said to Edward:

"Well, old fellow, she's gone!"

"Gone!" repeated Hawley in a gasping voice, and staggering like a drunken man.

"Yes," thundered Bonnard, suddenly leaping to his feet, his eyes gleaming with rage; "gone—and with that cursed traitor, Wayne!"

As though the very thought of Wayne drove him frantic, Louis picked up one of the prettily-adorned chairs, and with it smashed the mirror, lamp, and indeed everything breakable. This not having satiated him, he threw her books about the room heaping the bitterest curses on her. Edward was too much stunned by Bonnard's anger, as well as too greatly overcome with grief over Agnes's disappearance to interfere. It was only when the maddened man had reseated himself, and was looking at the letter again, that he ventured to speak.

"What does she say?" he asked gently.

"Oh, she has written a fine letter—a very fine letter I assure you, my boy," sneered Bonnard, bitterly. "She begs me not to be very angry—her heart is bound up in Wayne—curse him!—and she could never be happy away from him. She knows she doesn't deserve to be forgiven, therefore doesn't ask forgiveness, but implores us to pray for her future happi-

ness and pity her for her weakness. Pity her! Pray for her happiness!" Bonnard angrily cried. "Good God! Did she kneel at my feet and beg me to take her to my heart again, I think I should long to kill her! She deserves to suffer for this, and, by heaven, I hope she will!"

Edward made no reply, and for some time they were silent. Then Bonnard again spoke:

"Edward," he huskily said, laying his hands on his friend's shoulders, "my poor fellow, shake hands with me! She's done you an abominable wrong, old chap! But cheer up! She's not worth one thought of regret, and we must think of her no more! Come, my boy, don't worry over her loss!"

Edward had not the slightest idea of what Bonnard meant by saying Agnes had done him an abominable wrong, but supposed he meant that she had wronged him by going away as she had her brother. The past was still a blank to him.

"But," he remonstrated, "Agnes told me she was miserable here, and she meant to go away. If she can be happy by so doing, as she told me she believed she would be, I am glad for her sake that she has gone."

"She told you that she intended going away?"

Edward nodded assent.

"Oh, you blockhead!" roared Bonnard. "Why didn't you tell me of this? Had you done so it might have been prevented! While now—oh, God—it's too late!"

In his rage he could have killed Edward, had he not remembered the state of the poor fellow's mind.

"I didn't know I was doing wrong," Edward stammered. "She made me promise not to tell you."

"It is too late now, so it doesn't matter. But, I wish to heaven she had died ere she met that scoundrel, Wayne!" was Bonnard's fierce rejoinder.

"Wish Agnes had died! Oh, Louis, how can you speak so heartlessly!" said Edward with tears in his eyes.

Touched at the sight of his grief, Bonnard spoke more gently.

"My poor, old Edward, you don't understand, or you would in your anger wish so to. Ah, old fellow, it's a foolish thing for a man to put his trust in any woman—even in his own sister, for one never knows when they will prove false. Now leave me, my boy, for I want to think and be alone."

With a sad glance about the room as though he were bidding farewell to happiness forever, Edward departed. When he had gone, Louis sank into a chair, and covered his face with his hands.

It was all over now ! His anger was as nothing compared to his grief. He could have wept in the terrible agony that beset him. So Robert Wayne—the man to whom his heart had gone out in love and friendship, was the cause of his sister's downfall. There was some excuse for Agnes. She loved Wayne, and knowing the man he could understand and sympathize with her for her folly, although he had tried to make her give him up. But for Wayne there was no excuse. However dearly he might love Agnes, he was quite aware of the contemptible position in which he would be placing her, and therefore should have acted differently. Besides, he should have considered his wife. True, they cared nothing for each other ; still, she bore his name. And although she had tormented him ever since their marriage with a thousand carping acts, which annoyed and irritated, and turned his heart against her, yet she had not utterly forgotten her duty toward him. She was not devoted to him it was true, and circumstances had a great deal to do with her fidelity, but still—

And innumerable excuses and apologies for her surged up in Bonnard's mind. In his pity, he longed to go and tell her that he sympathized with her, and prove himself her friend. Half an hour later found him at the door of her house, inquiring for her.

The servant conducted him to the parlor, then left him to tell Mrs. Wayne. In a very little while she returned and said her mistress would soon be down.

The minutes passed slowly ; first ten, then fifteen, and Bonnard gradually became impatient for Mrs. Wayne's appearance. He was just wondering whether she had forgotten him ; when the door opened, and she entered.

She was very pale and seemed excited, but Bonnard thought he had never seen her look so beautiful as then. In her dress of dark blue cloth the delicate complexion was brought out in bold relief.

Bonnard bowed gravely to her, but did not speak. He knew not what to say. She came to his aid.

"This visit is unexpected, Mr. Bonnard," she constrainedly said, "and you have come in a time of trouble. Dr. Wayne has left me."

"Yes," she added as he did not reply, and she sank into a chair, "my husband has left me."

"I am extremely sorry—" Bonnard began, finding his voice at last, but she raised her hand with a gesture commanding silence.

"Pray, Mr. Bonnard, don't make use of unnecessary expressions. Besides, I don't want you to feel sorry. It is enough when Harriet Wayne pities herself," she coldly replied.

"I have no wish to be impertinent, or appear so, and especially to you," he returned. "But this trouble which has fallen upon you, has also affected me. I have lost my sister and friend."

"True," she answered, "I forgot that. But, after all, Mr. Bonnard, why should you mourn for them? They evidently thought little of how their flight would affect *us*. I, for one, care little, beyond that I will be compelled to listen to what people have to say about it. That's where the trouble comes in—to think that people calling themselves my friends will come to me and declare that they sympathize with me, while at the same time they are laughing over the situation. Oh, I know the world! But I can stand all the taunts. Had I loved my husband it would have been different, but I never cared for him, and he knew it; and needing love he sought it elsewhere. In your sister he found the characteristics he had sought in me, only to be disappointed. But why linger over the details, Mr. Bonnard? They have gone their way, and they are sure to be happy, for they understand each other."

And she laughed lightly, as though she were indulging in the most enjoyable conversation. Yet was there a tinge of bitterness in her laugh.

"But the disgrace—the shame of the affair!" exclaimed Bonnard angrily.

A faint flush arose in Mrs. Wayne's cheeks, her eyes were downcast, she fingered nervously with her bracelets, and then in a trembling voice said:

"I should have done the same as Agnes in a similar case."

Bonnard moved uneasily, as she darted a quick glance at him full of tenderest love, as she ceased speaking.

"Now that he is gone, what do you intend doing?" he asked with deep concern.

"I have not decided yet; of course I shall go away from here at once, though," was her cold reply, seeing that her tender glance and words had taken no effect upon him.

"Do you mean to say that you intend to desert all your friends?" he wonderingly questioned.

"All my friends have deserted *me*," was her rejoinder.

Again Bonnard moved uneasily; it seemed as though he was bound to get into hot water, and he wished to heaven he hadn't come. He looked at her, and saw that her lips were

twitching, and she was running the bracelets up and down her arms alternately as far as they would go, in her efforts to appear unconcerned.

"Indeed, Mrs. Wayne, you are unjust," Bonnard hastened to say; "why, which of your friends has deserted you?"

Barely were the words out of his mouth, when he would have given anything to have recalled them. Her eyes met his in a glance of profound affection and questioning. She leaned toward him, panting, blushing, and trembling.

"Who have deserted me?" she faltered. "You—you for one."

Bonnard frowned in displeasure, but returned:

"I am still your friend."

"Are you? Are you?" she bitterly asked. "Well, your friendship has undergone a great change, Mr. Bonnard; will you believe that? And I never thought you could change; you seemed to have such wondrous strength of character. Time was when I thought I was more than God to you, but that is past. But, Mr. Bonnard, don't, if you please, ever say again that you are my friend; there can be no friendship between two people who have played such important roles in each other's lives as you and I have done. Do you think that I could take a second place in your thoughts and affection, and calmly submit to it, when I had once believed I was all the world to you? No! Henceforth, as I have said in a former conversation we must meet as strangers or common acquaintances."

"I am sorry that you regard a piece of folly in so serious a light," Bonnard said, as he arose to take his leave.

She did not answer, but seemed to be suffocating. She was deathly white, and her hand clutched at the collar of her dress in a frenzy of nervousness. She arose from her seat and walked to one of the windows. Bonnard stepped hastily forward and opened it.

"What's the matter? Do you feel faint?" he asked in alarm, passing his arm about her waist.

"It is the heat, I guess," she answered. The cool breeze fanned her face and in a few moments she declared she was all right.

"Then you intend leaving here?" said Bonnard.

"Yes, at once."

He came quite close to her and took her hand in his. It lay limp in his clasp, but he pressed it warmly as he said, his voice full of sincerity:

"I hope you will be happy."

She returned a weary smile, and retorted somewhat coldly :

"Keep your wishes of happiness for someone who is liable to realize it, Mr. Bonnard. As for myself, I shall make the best of my life, you may be sure."

"You speak hopelessly of being happy," he sadly returned.

"I speak as I think," she laughed bitterly. "But, after all, one never knows what may turn up. I may yet be the happiest woman in the world, Mr. Bonnard."

"I earnestly hope so. But what do you intend doing to make yourself happy?"

"Now, if you'll promise not divulge the secret, I will tell you. Do you promise?"

There was a laughing light in her eyes as she looked at him and he emphatically declared he would never tell.

"Of course I have not really decided to do so, but I will need something to occupy my time. Mr. Bonnard, I have been thinking I should like to go on the stage."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Bonnard in amazement. This revelation was the last thing in the world he had expected to hear. He had thought that she meant to follow some noble path that would be a blessing to many, and so gain happiness for herself in the good she would be accomplishing.

"Yes," she went on, "you remember that you yourself told me I have a wonderful voice, and I know so very many people who will use their influence to make me a success. Will you come to see me when I make my appearance and congratulate me?"

Her manner was full of gaiety, as she fluttered around him, dancing, skipping, making graceful little motions with her head and hands, and always looking at him with a smile on her lips and in her eyes. But though she tried to hide it from him, Bonnard could see she was miserable, and he knew too, that she was wishing he would take his leave.

"I shall indeed do so with pleasure," he assured her. "And you have my best wishes for your success."

"Thank you. And will you send me an invitation to your wedding?"

"I will; and now, Mrs. Wayne, I will say good-morning. I am afraid I have lingered too long already."

"Good-morning, Mr. Bonnard. I hope I shall have the pleasure of seeing you again soon," she said.

"Oh, yes."

They shook hands cordially, apparently the best of friends once more, and then Bonnard left.

“ Well, well ! ” he mused, as he walked homeward. “ This is a pretty ending to the life of the woman I had once thought of making my wife. Like all who play with fire, she was bound some time to get scorched. When she had all to make her life happy—a husband’s love, health, wealth, and the respect of all who knew her, she wasn’t satisfied ; she must seek for other laurels in the admiration and love of men who laughed at her. Well, she has her just deserts, no doubt ; but it’s a pity she didn’t lead a different life. And she intends going on the stage too. Bah ! but then that sort of life will suit her. She must have admiration it seems ! ”

And Bonnard’s face expressed the deep disgust he felt.

Mrs. Wayne had stood at the window watching Bonnard as he left the house and until he was lost to her view ; then she slowly walked toward the fire, and stretching out her hands to the heat, murmured angrily :

“ Oh, fool—fool that I am to love that man so well ! He laughs at me for my folly ! And I was idiot enough to imagine that he came here this morning to tell me that he still loved me ! Oh, I could kill myself for having been so foolish as to let him know I still care for him. I had thought that my heart was hardened toward him ! But, I will live down this madness ; I’ll learn to hate him ! ”

CHAPTER XXVII.

BONNARD MEETS AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE.

LOUIS BONNARD wrote a long letter to Mr. Richmond, stating all the particulars of the elopement of his sister, and declaring that, now Agnes was gone, he needed Estelle more than ever. Mr. Richmond’s reply was to the effect that his business would not permit him to go to Brooklyn just then. Six months hence, however, everything could be agreeably arranged and carried out. Even Estelle, in her sweet, loving way said the same thing in her letters, so that, although disappointed with their ultimatum, Louis was forced to submit.

His heart was very bitter against Agnes. He swore he would never forgive her. Indeed his anger was so intense, that when Edward sometimes bemoaned her absence, he commanded him never to mention her name again. And poor Edward was almost heart-broken over the loss of his sweet companion, and missed her more and more every day. Bonnard, although kind to him, had other things to occupy his mind, and could

not indulge all the odd whims that came into Edward's head ; and speak to him, and soothe him as Agnes had done.

But Louis worried over his sister's absence more than he cared to admit. True, he was very angry with her, but he loved her dearly for all that.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Wayne had left Brooklyn for Chicago, where she was to appear the following season with an excellent operatic company. The fact that her husband had deserted her, got into the newspapers, and as she was described in the usual way as a suffering saint, and her husband a very devil, she became quite notorious in that role alone. And this helped her very much to achieve fame as an actress.

On a lovely November day six months after Agnes's elopement, and while Mrs. Wayne was making quite a sensation in Chicago, Louis Bonnard received a letter from Estelle, in which she said that she would arrive in Brooklyn in a few days with her father.

Bonnard, almost mad with joy, hastened to tell Edward the news. But, though pleased to hear of Louis' coming happiness, Edward was not much interested, and soon fell into his old habit of wondering whether Agnes was happy, or if she ever thought of him.

Two days later, as the young men were in the sitting-room enjoying their newspapers, a cab rattled up. In another moment, the clang of the door-bell sounded through the house.

Bonnard hastened to open the door—a wild thrill of expectation coursing through his veins. Sure enough as he opened it, his eyes rested on the sylph-like form, the sweet face with its big gray eyes sparkling with happiness and fun, and the soft, clustering curls of fair hair of Estelle Richmond.

Louis was conscious that behind her stood the tall, thin figure of her father, his good-natured countenance aglow with happiness. But the young man had eyes for nothing but the daughter just then. He gave her one piercing look as if searching her very heart and soul, and then drew her into the hall ; and notwithstanding the fact that her father was looking at them, he kissed her fervently.

“ Mr. Bonnard ! Really, sir, I shall accuse you of being intentionally neglectful of the aged. Are you aware, sir, that I have said, ‘ how—do—you—do ? ’ at least half a dozen times ? ” interposed the bluff, cheery voice of Richmond at this moment.

Bonnard looked up as though awakened from a dream, then, releasing Estelle, he shook the old gentleman's hand heartily,

and bade him welcome. They then repaired to the sitting-room, where Edward greeted his uncle and cousin warmly. But though they were very kind, nothing seemed to revive in him the once cheerful, happy spirit which they had formerly known.

The night, though one of intense pleasure to Louis and Estelle was passed very quietly. Both Estelle and her father declared their return to Brooklyn was extremely sad without having Agnes to welcome them.

“And how is she getting on?” asked Estelle.

Bonnard frowned darkly and said he didn’t know, and didn’t care.

“Oh, how can you be so hard-hearted?” reproachfully cried the little woman, with tears in her eyes. “I declare, you’re a monster—you don’t love anybody!”

They were seated in a secluded part of the room away from Edward and Mr. Richmond, so that their conversation was not overheard.

“Now, darling,” interposed Bonnard tenderly, “you know at least that I love *you*.”

“No, you don’t!” pouted Estelle, “such an unfeeling man cannot love anyone.”

“What utter nonsense! Why I’d give my life for you!” Louis earnestly declared.

“But, if you don’t love Agnes, you don’t love me—there!”

“I haven’t said I didn’t love her. The fact is, I am afraid I love her too well after the disgrace she has brought upon our name. But I’ll never forgive her—never! Now don’t reason with me further, dearest, because I am inexorable on that point.”

And he looked so very stern at that moment, that Estelle said nothing further on the subject. But, deep down in her heart she resolved that Louis should yet be reconciled to his sister. In the meantime she would find out where Wayne and Agnes had gone—through the doctor’s lawyer, and she would write to them, and learn how they were, and tell them all that was going on in Brooklyn, for she argued:

“Louis is headstrong, and will not yield very readily though he may be longing from the bottom of his heart to hear from them. As for Wayne and Agnes, they no doubt fear that if they write, it will only rouse Louis’ anger the more. But I will be their angel of guidance in this at least.”

When Bonnard had mastered his emotion occasioned by their conversation about Agnes, he turned to Estelle and gaily inquired:

"When is our wedding to come off, Estelle?"

"Oh, not for some time yet," she answered with a merry laugh and a toss of her curly head.

"But, seriously, darling, when is it to be?" Bonnard impatiently persisted.

"Well, when will you want me?" she asked demurely.

"Now—this very minute, you witch," he laughed. "But all joking aside, Essie—when is it to be? Can you manage to have your trousseau ready in a month?"

"I think I can. And how would New Year's night do for the wedding?" she asked merrily.

"Capital! It will be very appropriate too. We will start our life together with the beginning of a new year, then go on a wedding-tour, and while we are gone the home can be fixed up, and then we will settle down to a long and happy existence."

Bonnard smiled down into the sweet face with loving tenderness when he had ceased speaking.

"It all seems to be so bright, from the way you picture it. But will it be just that way?" she questioned, anxiously.

"I am sure of it;" he emphatically returned. "You see, darling, our marriage will not be like other people's. *We* love each other."

"Ah, yes," she sweetly rejoined. "I had forgotten that."

The smile came back to her lips again, and she looked brightly into his face.

"Shall I tell them?" whispered Bonnard, glancing at Mr. Richmond and Edward.

She blushed, smiled, pouted a little in disapproval and finally consented.

When their mutual agreement was broached to the others, there was great rejoicing. Mr. Richmond declared that his longing to have a son was at last to be realized, and he was happy to claim such a one as Mr. Bonnard beyond all others. Edward also congratulated the lovers, and said it gave him much pleasure to do so.

And so, into the desolation of Bonnard's heart and home there was to shine again the cheerful and tender light of a woman's love and presence. But was *she*, the sister who for over eighteen years had shared his every grief and joy, to be an outcast from his heart now that Estelle was to be his wife? Would he resolutely turn his thoughts from her, and never send the kind, forgiving words that would bring her back? Alas! it seemed so—for long years afterward, although Estelle

had done all within the power of her loving heart to reconcile them, he would fly into a rage at the mere mention of her name, and swear he would never forgive her as long as he lived.

* * * * *

A week before the wedding took place, Louis Bonnard was surprised one morning to receive a letter addressed to him in Mrs. Wayne's handwriting. Tearing open the envelope he read :

"Dear Mr. Bonnard:—I will be in New York in a few days to play at the—Theatre. If I send you tickets will you come and see me? Bring Miss Richmond with you. I have a desire to know what you think of my abilities, and therefore make this request. Besides you recollect you promised to come.

"Yours Sincerely,
"HARRIET WAYNE."

At the end of the note were the words : " Please send your answer to the General Post Office, New York, so that I can get it when I arrive."

Bonnard complied with Mrs. Wayne's request, though he wondered a good deal why she should have asked him to do such a thing.

It never occurred to his mind that she had done so for the purpose of seeing him—yet that was her sole subject. Mrs. Wayne was perfectly well aware that she could not see Bonnard otherwise—at least without giving him cause to think she was still deeply in love with him. And she wanted to see him—longed to feast her eyes again on his dear face. For although she desired to hate him, her passion was still strong and craved to indulge its longing.

The tickets came in due course, and Bonnard and Estelle made use of them, though Estelle did not wish to attend the performance.

That night the theatre was crowded and the curtain went up amid no little excitement. The lights among the audience were lowered, and the stage was brilliant in its setting—the beauty of the men and women, the lights, and the music as it swelled through the building in a soft, low monotone was entrancing.

But amongst all the divinely fair women was one superior to the rest in appearance and gracefulness. She likewise commanded the most attention, yet she was not the star. But the audience, or the men in it at least, found it a pleasanter task to gaze upon the elegant form and beautiful features of this one

woman than listen to the most exquisite music ever sang by a woman less attractive.

Besides, her voice although not great was extremely sweet.

Louis and Estelle both watched this woman attentively, and her eyes met theirs at times in a glance of recognition, as they leaned forward in the box nearest the stage.

When the performance was almost over, an usher came with a message to Bonnard that "Mrs. Wayne would like to see them in the dressing-room, when the opera was over."

Accordingly they went, and found her surrounded by half a dozen admirers. Two men stood near the door of the room speaking when they entered. Said one to the other:

"She is beautiful enough to drive a man out of his senses, but she's the most heartless woman I ever met."

"Heartless?" returned the other in surprise. "Ah, but I can recollect the time when that same woman would almost die for me."

The voice was full of mockery and conceit.

"Both Estelle and Louis, recognizing it, turned and looked at the speaker, and saw—their old acquaintance, Conrad Moore.

Their eyes met and they nodded to each other.

"How are you, Mr. Moore? You are quite a stranger since your marriage," Louis coldly remarked.

"Very well, I thank you. And how are you, and Miss Richmond? Both well? Ah, that is good! What wonderful changes have been going on in the lives of our old friends of late. Poor Edward! It is a thousand pities he should have become such a simpleton. But he always was a little weak *here*."

And this very sympathetic young man, with a laugh of contempt, tapped his forehead significantly.

"People who think themselves smart, are often greater simpletons than those who are unfortunate enough to be considered so," was Bonnard's pointed rejoinder.

"Ah, so?" was the smiling retort. "Really, Mr. Bonnard, you are an amusing chap. Your jokes are so stunning!"

"Ah, but the fault of my jokes lie in the fact that they are not always appreciated in the sense I wish to convey them," replied Bonnard, with flashing eyes.

"Indeed? That's too bad!"

Bonnard was aching to punch him, for his smooth-tongued conversation was exasperating.

"How is your wife?" he managed to say with apparent pleasant interest.

"Not feeling very well of late, and the doctors say she will not last long," was the indifferent reply.

"Sad for you," said Bonnard, with an affected glance of pity.

"Yes; but the poor thing declares she would like to die, and be out of her misery."

"I don't doubt it," and bowing politely to him, Bonnard advanced with Estelle toward Mrs. Wayne, who had been watching them ever since their entrance.

Not long afterward, Bonnard learned that Moore's wife had died; but instead of being a wealthy widower, he was left penniless, his wife having made a will in favor of her sister—as Moore's constant neglect and cruelty to her plainly indicated that he had married her for her wealth alone. He was compelled to adapt the stage as a profession once more to earn his livelihood, and from all accounts is doing so still.

Mrs. Wayne greeted Louis and Estelle effusively, yet there was a constraint in her manner. She wanted to act coldly toward Bonnard yet she yearned to tell him how dear he was to her. Estelle watched them with jealous rage. She was not quite so blind as Bonnard. He thought that when Mrs. Wayne's hand sought his or she laid hers on his arm, that it was only done to show her friendliness, and naturally, being anxious to show her that he appreciated that fact, he gave her hand many tender little pressures.

But, she was not foolish enough to misinterpret his attentions now. She knew, just as surely as she knew that he would forget their conversation ten minutes after he had left her, that his heart was so cold toward her as the heart of any man loving another woman. Yet the happiness she realized in seeing and speaking to him, was of great solace to her, and her yearning for his love was, if possible, more intense than it ever had been.

When they parted that night, after a pleasant chat about her stage life, Mrs. Wayne was very sad.

"You must not forget to come to our wedding," said Bonnard, smilingly shaking hands with her.

"It is four days hence, is it not?"

The answer was "Yes," given simultaneously by Louis and Estelle. Harriet said she thought she would come, but wished them happiness in any event.

She gazed lingeringly at Bonnard; her eyes were full of sad yearning, and her lips quivered. She was glad when they had gone, and refusing several invitations to supper, rode home

alone to her hotel—thoughtful, heart-broken, with her brain on fire contemplating a means that was to be the end of all her misery.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MRS. WAYNE COMMITS SUICIDE.

MRS. WAYNE'S room was in darkness when she entered it, except for the moonlight streaming in through the window. She sank wearily upon an ottoman in front of the fire, and fell to thinking.

A feeling of loneliness and desolation was upon her such as she had never felt before. The world seemed to possess nothing further of happiness, and she yearned for peace and rest with that intenseness that only blighted hopes can arouse in our hearts. She had tried to forget Bonnard in the gay career of an actress, but this kind of life, although delightful and full of satisfying ambition, had not soothed her heartaches. And what did it all amount to in the end? For one moment to lay her head on Bonnard's breast, she would gladly have sacrificed herself to months of misery. Alas! such wild longings were never to be realized. But she would end her misery! Better so, than live and suffer as she had done.

Yet the thought of death was so repugnant, that her heart shrank with dread and loathing as she contemplated it. Then came the thought—could she bear to live knowing that another woman possessed Louis' affections? Oh, no, no, no! Better death than go mad—which must surely be the result of such mental agony.

Filled with an unconquerable resolve to end her life, she lit the gas, and seated herself to write a farewell letter to Bonnard. Tears gathered in her eyes, and fell upon her hands as they lay clasped before her on the table over the writing-paper. It seemed so terrible to be seated there full of life and strength and beauty, then to contemplate that in a little while she would be dead—utterly unloved and unmourned! She had never thought her love for Bonnard would have brought her to this. A few months ago she had been so happy in the thought that she would be his. While now—but no, she must not think any longer of what was, but put an end to all.

She dipped her pen resolutely into the ink and wrote:

"DEAR LOUIS:—I address you once more, and for the last time, by the loved name I have ever cherished so fondly. You have been to my soul and heart, what the air is to life—a necessity; and during all the

long years of our first parting, I never forgot you even for an hour. Oh, dearest, if you ever harbored contempt for me, be merciful now! Remember how I have loved you—not wisely, as most women love, but too well! I have been vain, frivolous, and heartless to others, but my heart has always been true to you. I lived in the sweet hope of one day being with you for all time; and I have tried so much to be worthy of you, although you may think otherwise.

“Life no longer holds any hope for me; *you* were all I craved. But you sought another love. Do you remember years ago, having given me a piece of evergreen, and full of pride and happiness you had repeated a tender little poem in German, which when translated was:

“‘Our love shall not be
Like the roses and liles;
They fade!
But like the evergreen,
Shall live for all time.’

“Ah, Louis, how full of power and strength were the words; but, God! how weakly they were carried out! Dearest, do not think I am reproaching you. I am only regretting what has ended so bitterly. Harriet never loved you so well as now, and in her love she hopes you will be always happy. She hopes that the wife you have chosen will be to you, all that she feels she could have been—your friend, comforter, and companion.

“When you gaze upon my dead face, Louis, will you think kindly of me, and touch my poor cold hands tenderly? Oh, God! only to feel your arms about me once more, my beloved!

“Tell Estelle, I hope she will forgive me. I never meant to do the poor child any wilful harm, for God knows I loved you dearly. And Agnes and Robert!—tell them I remembered them.

“And now, farewell! I go to that unknown beyond from whose bourne there is no return. Farewell—farewell!”

She dropped the pen when she had ceased writing, and buried her face in her hands—her whole form convulsed with sobs. And so she remained for a long time. When she arose, she went to the corner of the room where her trunks stood, and opening one, took from the very bottom of it, a creamy cashmere dress, trimmed with rich lace. It was the same that she had worn when Bonnard had told her that his love was all pretention.

“I never thought to wear it again,” she murmured as she pressed out one or two creases. “But I’ll wear it now; perhaps if he remembers the circumstances connected with it, his heart would grow tender and loving toward me, and he will kiss the poor lips that will never speak and tell him again that I loved him better than my own life. Oh, dearest, is it thus my love for you must end? In the grave!”

She clasped her hands in agony, and her eyes were full of anguish and despair. At length, however, she proceeded to

attire herself. She was very careful with her toilet, arranging her hair in the most becoming fashion. She took even greater care in dressing than if she were going to a ball, for it gave her pleasure to think that even in death she would command admiration by right of her beauty.

When she had addressed the letter to Bonnard, she took a vial labelled "laudanum" from the table where she had laid it. Then she knelt before a crimson plush couch, and her white lips moved in prayer. After awhile she lay down on the couch in a graceful position, and uncorking the vial, raised it to her lips. Her hand quivered and the laudanum had barely touched her lips, when she sprang to her feet, spilling half of the liquid on her gown; her eyes were full of wild horror and her face was ghastly.

"I cannot do it!" she moaned; "I cannot do it in spite of all my misery! Death is so horrible—even though life is maddening! And, I'm so beautiful!"

She stood before a long mirror and surveyed herself.

"How foolish for the sake of one man to commit suicide when there are hundreds who admire me. But ah, I'm so miserable! I love him so! I cannot live without him!"

And so, reasoning between life and death, she wandered about the room in an aimless way, and paused at length at the window. How calm the night! The stars were twinkling brightly in their deep bed of blue, and the moon made everything as light as day. How beautiful the world was after all, and what folly to think of leaving it of one's own accord. But the cry came from her lips again:

"I'm so miserable! I cannot live without him!"

And she turned away from the calm beauty of the night with a heavy heart. She picked up the vial containing the laudanum again, and turned it over and over, and shook the liquid, all the while being in deep meditation.

Gradually her lips compressed. She went to the mirror and inspected herself to see if her hair had become disarranged. Satisfying herself that all was right, she turned away and went to the couch once more and lay down. Without the least hesitation now, she raised the vial to her lips, and resisting the impulse to cast it aside, with grim determination swallowed the contents.

The tragedy of her life was done. The sunlight of a new day would never dawn on her again. Like the sadness of her

life—for in spite of all her apparent gaiety it had been such—everything would be grim and black, for this was death!

She had sought in death what the man she worshipped could not give, and which the devotion of other men, however sincere, could not gratify. Even in those days when she had been sure of Bonnard's love, there was ever a craving in her jealous nature that demanded superiority over others, in every respect. But it was at an end now! Her placid brow would never more be wrinkled, or her heart know the dull throbs of misery. She had sought the great Liberator, and he had gladly received her.

The following morning, a policeman called on Bonnard and told him the news and placed her letter in his hand. He was almost stunned. He could not comprehend why she should do such an act—even under the circumstances, and he suffered keenly to think that he was the cause of it.

He hastened to the hotel at once, and was shown to her room. No one had disturbed anything in the apartment since the tragedy. She lay as if she were asleep—as beautiful almost as when living.

Bonnard knelt beside her lifeless form with mingled feelings of pity and regret, and took the cold, still hand in his own, and gazed at the fair, white face. He smoothed the hair from her brow in a lingering, caressing way, and softly patted her cheek. But there was no tender yielding of the flesh to his caresses. His head sank forward upon the pulseless heart, and he wept bitter tears of reproach and agony. He remembered how he had at one time loved this woman—had regarded her as the soul of all that was lovely, and pure, and good.

"Oh, Harriet, my dear—my first love!" he passionately murmured, tenderly fondling the cold face and hands, and putting his arms around her as though he would draw her to his breast, and kissing the silent lips as lovingly as even *she* could have wished.

But it was of no avail. The tender words and caresses that would have thrilled her soul with rapture in life, left no impression now. She was dead, dead! The word seemed to dance before his eyes, and kept continually thumping in his heart and brain.

He was lenient to all her faults now. Her gay life, and the heart-aches of those on whom she had exerted the power of her beauty and fascinating manners, were as utterly forgotten as though they had never existed. The bitterness of

his own suffering when she had rejected *him* for Dr. Wayne, was forgotten too; the insinuating reflections many people had cast upon her questionable reputation, were all overlooked; whereas, a short time ago he had been the first to pass judgment upon her actions. He argued now:

"A woman capable of such love as she bore me, must have noble principles, however foolish she may have acted. Oh, Harriet, Harriet, have I driven you to your death?"

And again overcome, he fell to lamenting over his folly, and wishing all sorts of miserable and impossible things.

His thoughts were far away from Estelle now; it was as though his love for Mrs. Wayne had been revived and intensified under the influence of this sad tragedy.

Her farewell letter, the silent lips closed forever, and her beauty and grace even in death, appealed more to his feelings than all her imploring words had ever done. Death had brought about what in life she could not have accomplished. But ah, she needed no longer the tender love and caresses, for which she had so often yearned.

And Bonnard was conscious of this fact too.

A hand laid on his arm, caused him to look up, and he saw again the policeman who had informed him of her death.

"I beg pardon, sir—" said the officer respectfully, then pointed in the direction of the door. Louis followed the man's gesture, and saw three or four other men standing in the hall. He quietly submitted to the necessity of leaving the room; understanding that they wished to make an investigation regarding Mrs. Wayne's death. He clasped her hand once more, and then sadly left her. At the door he was stopped, and questioned as to who he was, what relation he was to the dead woman, and similar questions. When he had answered them to the satisfaction of those who asked, he was permitted to go.

In a dazed way he walked to the hotel where Estelle and her father stopped, and told them all. They were of course surprised to hear the news, but expressed no very deep concern. In truth, Estelle experienced a deep relief, for, although pretty and attractive herself, she was woman enough to be jealous of another superior in good looks to herself, especially when Bonnard paid so much attention to her rival.

Mrs. Wayne's death was in fact regretted by but few. She had no friends amongst women, and the majority of the men did not pity her much after expressing so decidedly her preference for Bonnard, and leaving them in the cold,

Bonnard was the chief mourner, and he did everything within his power to have the funeral service performed as nearly as possible what he believed she would have desired. But he hated the notoriety that was forced upon him under the circumstances. He was also somewhat annoyed with Estelle, who was cold and distant in her manner toward him, because he manifested too deep an interest in the proceedings.

The day of the funeral came at last however, without any serious misunderstanding between them. Bonnard, Mr. Richmond, and Estelle were the first to arrive at the fashionable undertaking establishment where Mrs. Wayne's body had been taken to await burial.

As they stood beside the coffin, and gazed down at the beautiful face, Estelle could not restrain the tears of pity that would come in spite of all her efforts to restrain them. She realized how petty were all her jealousies now, for who could war with dumb, unconscious clay?"

She kissed the poor lips sadly, and regretted that they had not been better friends—and thus all enmity was at an end between them.

Bonnard also took a sad leave-taking of her with his heart full of agony, and Mr. Richmond was grave and silent.

After the church service had been conducted, they proceeded on the long, weary ride to the cemetery. Slowly the carriages drew to a stop, and the cemetery-bell tolled a welcome to another who had come to sleep the last, long sleep. Involuntarily a shiver ran through those who regretted her death most. Then the carriages rolled onward rapidly on the smooth roads until they arrived at the grave. In a few minutes more the coffin had been lowered into the ground. Bonnard, having casually observed evergreen growing on a mound near by, took a piece and dropped it into the grave—a faint smile, that was full of sadness, crossing his face as he did so.

Then followed a sermon, spoken by a grave, white-haired minister, and the solemn words falling upon Bonnard's ear made him shudder.

"For from dust were ye made, and unto dust shall ye return."

God! was it possible that that beautiful form was to crumble to dust in the grave? Through the long years to come, was her beauty and fascinating manner to be cherished only in memory?

These thoughts almost drove him mad. It seemed impossible that what had been so greatly admired, must thus perish.

So absorbed had he been in his thoughts, that he had failed to notice that the minister had ceased speaking. The dull, hollow echo of the earth falling upon the coffin-lid, brought back his thoughts with a shock of horror to the present. With every shovelful of earth into the grave, his heart seemed to say : "Gone—gone!"

He held his hat in front of his eyes in the pretence of shielding them from the sunlight, but in reality it was to hide his tears.

She had loved him well, alas, too well! and she was at least worthy of some regret on his part. Gone? Ay, the last tie between them was severed! But as he drove home, the thought did come to him that after all it was for the best. She was at peace now, and Dr. Wayne was free to make Agnes his wife. This thought was somewhat consoling, for, although he had no intention whatever of forgiving the doctor and his sister, still, he was naturally desirous of seeing Agnes, Wayne's wife.

Estelle had watched him with pensive eyes during their journey home, and noticing the expression, he caught the little figure to his heart in a loving embrace and whispered :

"My love is all yours, darling. Don't worry!"

The embrace and the assuring words worked like a charm. For the rest of the day she was her old self—loving, gentle, and amiable, and the gloom gradually dispersed from Bonnard's heart and face.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE WEDDING OF LOUIS AND ESTELLE.

ON account of poor Harriet Wayne's death, Louis Bonnard had postponed his marriage to Estelle one week—a tribute in a measure to that unfortunate but beautiful woman's untimely end.

The wedding day at last came round, and bright and clear it was. If such a day could be any indication of a happy future, then their lives surely had every promise of it.

In her trailing robes of white satin and point lace, and bouquet of white rosebuds, the bride looked more charming than ever before. Her pretty face was rosy with blushes, and her bright eyes were full of happiness.

Bonnard also looked very handsome as he took his place beside her at the altar. When the words which made them man and wife had been spoken, and they had been con-

gratulated by their friends, Bonnard made haste to leave the church.

He did not forget that only a week before, Mrs. Wayne had committed suicide for love of him ; and now, standing in the very church to be married, where only a short time ago the funeral service had been read over her, revived all the events of that sad day with sorrowful intensity. It seemed as though a shadow were hanging over them. He could not cast aside the memory of that terrible tragedy, even on this, the happiest day of his life. The thought of the beautiful form lying in the cemetery, cold and silent forever, with only the gentle breeze or blasting storm, the song-birds, the sky, and trees for company, filled his heart with a pang of profound reproach. It seemed so heartless to be celebrating his marriage so soon after her death—her pitiful, heart-broken death.

Perceiving his sad, preoccupied air, Estelle did her best to cheer him. She knew what he was thinking of, and so carefully avoided referring to anything that might intensify his anguish. But in her sweet, loving way, that was so child-like yet withal so womanly, she spoke to him.

"I mean to be so kind to you, dearest, she said in her sweet voice, nestling close to him in the carriage as they were being driven home—"I shall never worry you, and I mean to attend to all your wants myself, as Agnes used to do."

A smile crept into Louis' face as he listened ; and he assured her in very lovable terms that he on his part would not fail to appreciate her kindness.

And so they passed the time until they arrived home.

Estelle was as happy as a lark, her only regret being that Agnes was not there to witness the wedding and share in their joyousness. But her regret was only momentary and did not dim the radiance of her joyous spirit. She was everywhere ; now with her arms around her father's neck, asking him quite gravely if he will miss his little girl very much, and laughing hysterically through a mist of tears when he assures her that he will. Then, there is Edward, whom she comes upon unawares, and putting her hands over his eyes, waits laughingly for him to tell her who it is. He feels her hands and hesitates, and finally whispers : "Agnes," and a pang of pain shoots through Estelle's heart as she considers what his disappointment will be when he discovers it is only her. But she dares not continue his suspense, so she falls upon her knees beside him and caresses his poor, pale face, and conjures him not to worry, for Agnes will come again. And he sobs and

declares he will have no one to care for him when she too is gone—although only for a temporary period. But he yields nobly to the sacrifice of parting with her when the time comes, and does not express the selfish wish that she will give up the pleasure of her wedding tour and stay with him in the old home.

Then there were the innumerable friends to say something kind to, and listen as each one separately congratulated her over and over again, and said perhaps, something relative to married life—such as instructing her that she must not let Mr. Bonnard dictate too much to her simply because he is her husband now. And Estelle listens to all the instructions in that vein, with a horrified little stare, and wishes people wouldn't say such cruel things. But she nevertheless decides that she will do everything to make her life as peaceful and joyous as possible, as well as Louis' too.

She is too excited to eat, but blushes and laughs to a degree that is really startling, as the guests drink a toast to the bride and groom, and pass some witty remarks thereon. She is really very happy. Her future seems bright with perfect contentment, and what more can mortal desire?

After a while she steals away to take a last glance at the familiar rooms in the old house that is to be her home, and thinks of all the happy associations connected with it. In the trim kitchen all glitter with cooking utensils polished to the last degree of brilliancy, she had first come upon Agnes in her own home, and had learned to love her as a sister and dear friend. In the dining-room, Louis had caught her playing with the little white kitten, that had since grown into a monstrous sized cat. And the cheerful, little parlor! How often when she had come to see Agnes had they sat around the fire, and Louis had been so attentive to her, as to cause Agnes to leave the room in the pretence of having something to do, so that they might be alone. Ah, those were happy days! dear, foolishly happy days! and yet how sweetly remembered!

She looked at Agnes's room last. It was still in the same condition that Bonnard had left it on the day when he had learned of her elopement. The mirror in its white frame was shattered in a thousand pieces, and broken bric-a-brac lay strewn about the floor.

Estelle surveyed the damage sadly.

"But it shall all be as she used to have it—I will see to that," she reflected with compressed lips. "And by and by she shall return to us, and occupy the old room; for, my dear

husband, I shall not give you an hour's peace until you consent to forgive her and the doctor, and make them both welcome."

And she turned away laughing at her plans—for she had not the slightest doubt, but that her influence over Louis was so great, she could make him do whatever she wished.

As Estelle came down from Agnes's room, Bonnard was waiting for her at the foot of the staircase, wondering what had delayed her.

He quickly informed her that the hour had at length arrived for them to leave, so that she would have ample time to change her wedding dress for a traveling costume at her hotel, ere they started on their journey.

Accordingly she bade good-by to all her friends, lingering lovingly beside her father and Edward (who were to remain in each other's company until their return), and finally parting with them amid a burst of tears.

Bonnard gave some last instructions to Mr. Richmond, then bade him and Edward an affectionate adieu; and, with a last good-by to all the others, he led Estelle from the house amid a shower of rice and old shoes, and hearty good wishes, and waving of handkerchiefs.

Then they were driven away in a carriage, until a turn in the street lost them to the view of their well wishers.

And so the chief excitement of the event was over, and the bride and groom were at last free to speak in unmolested silence of the happy union that had so sweetly blessed them.

"I am so happy!" said each to the other. And as Bonnard drew his wife to his breast, and looked down into the sweet face, the memory of the beautiful woman who had loved him so madly returned to his mind, and he thought of her farewell words regarding her affection for him:

"In her love for you Harriet hopes that you will always be happy. She hopes that the wife you have chosen will be to you all that she feels she could have been—your friend, comforter, and companion."

CHAPTER XXX.

"THERE IS LIGHT AT THE EVENTIDE."

SEVEN years have passed since the marriage of Louis and Estelle, and how many changes have taken place in that time!

There was one incident at least, which we take pleasure in recording—The reconciliation of Louis, Agnes, and Dr. Wayne, and this is how it was brought about:

Edward Hawley had gradually fallen into a decline, from which the doctors said he would never recover. His continual longing was to see Agnes once more; and, as Bonnard was but human, he could not for the sake of his stern resolve deny poor Edward's dying wish. Besides, though he had never admitted it, his own heart yearned tenderly toward his sister and former friend. And so he gave Estelle, who corresponded with Agnes regularly, permission to bid them come back to the old home. The invitation was accepted, and the day of their arrival set for the coming Christmas.

And now it is here—an ideal Christmas of ice and snow which covers the ground, envelopes the branches of the trees, and clothes everything that it can in its spotless purity. The window-panes are exquisitely decorated too—with ferns and figures of every kind brought there by the frost, and the merry jingle of the sleigh-bells lend their joyous sounds to the beauty of the scene.

In the old Willow Street house, the family had assembled in the parlor, waiting and listening for the arrival of the expected ones.

Before the bright, cheerful fire sat Mr. Richmond with his laughing little grandson on his knee, whose chief delight was to pull the old gentleman's moustache, until tears of pain came into his eyes, which compelled grandpa at last to make the hands of the young mischief-maker prisoner. Then there is a bawl of remonstrance on the part of the young tyrant, and as Mr. Richmond is afraid he will bawl still more, and doesn't wish to have the little rebel spanked, he submits like a martyr to the torture of nearly having his lips pulled out of shape, and groans inwardly until his grandson's playfulness is appeased.

Edward is sitting in an easy chair near by, propped up with pillows, appearing very happy and contented, now that he knows he will soon see Agnes again. But he is weak and emaciated nevertheless. He glances down at a pretty little woman on an ottoman beside him, reading aloud from a volume of poetry. It is Estelle, though grown somewhat stouter and more womanly to be sure, but still the same Estelle in disposition—merry, amiable, and tender as ever.

Bonnard is standing at one of the windows, gazing out at the wintry scene; his face is very stern and he is doubtless thinking of how he will welcome his sister and brother-in-law—for although he had sent the invitation for them to come home, his heart refused to receive them with the degree of warmth

necessary. He cannot forget that Agnes had brought disgrace on his name, which had been saved only by the merest chance. And yet politeness and love demanded that he should welcome them warmly and gladly. But, as he glanced round, and his eyes fell upon Edward's face, and he noticed every sad change that had taken place in the poor fellow since the night Agnes had broken her promise to him, his heart grew stern and unrelenting. He again gazed out into the street in uncertain and gloomy thought; but in a few minutes turned round and announced with some trepidation—for a carriage was about to stop at the door:

"Here they are!"

The effect of his words was quite startling. Grandfather Richmond was on his feet in an instant, and with his little tormentor raised on his shoulder, made for the hall, as also did Estelle. But Bonnard lingered behind with Edward, who was so excited that he made an attempt to get up, only to fall back helplessly in his chair.

Bonnard could not bring himself to the point of going out to meet them, so he tried to calm Edward's excited nerves; but he was conscious nevertheless of all that was occurring outside. He saw Dr. Wayne, looking happier than he had ever seen him before and scarcely a day older in appearance, alight from the carriage, then turn to assist Agnes. Bonnard watched breathlessly now. He saw a small hand encased in a dark glove extended for the doctor to grasp, and in another moment a lady had stepped to the pavement, and hurried toward the house, her face beaming with happiness. It was Agnes—his dear, little sister! With an exclamation of joy Louis darted from the room, all his love rekindled at the sight of her.

She was clasped in Estelle's arms when he came amongst them, but seeing him, she released herself, and with a glad cry threw herself upon his breast, exclaiming again and again, as she looked at him through a mist of tears, all the while caressing his face and hands:

"Dear Louis!—dear brother! oh, I'm so, so glad to see you!"

What extravagant caresses and endearing epithets they indulged in! and how they both laughed heartily afterwards when they happened to recall it.

It was only when when Dr. Wayne approached that Bonnard had finally satisfied his ardor, for, clasping the doctor's hand was a slender, frail little creature with large, mournful dark

eyes—the very picture of Agnes—and for the first time Bonnard realized he was an uncle. He took the little girl in his arms, and while he tenderly caressed the pretty face, his hand sought the doctor's, and the two men were once more sworn friends, by the assuring, firm clasp of their hands.

In the midst of their happiness, poor Edward had been forgotten. Agnes was the first to ask for him. Being told that he was in the parlor, she stole softly toward the room and peeped in. He was eagerly watching the door, and catching sight of her for one fleeting moment ere she drew back to overcome the shock his changed appearance had wrought upon her, he stretched forth his arms yearningly, and called her name :

“ Agnes !—Agnes ! Come to me ! ”

How sepulchrally weak the voice ! The very sound made Agnes shiver and draw back in dread. But again it rang out in pleading accents :

“ Oh, Agnes, Agnes ! do not keep me waiting ! ”

She entered the room then, and smiling sweetly went to his chair. She sank beside him, and clasped the thin, cold hands in her own warm palms, and softly patted and kissed the poor face. How he brightened under the influence of her caresses, and with what joy he gazed at her.

Still no recollection of what she had been to him in the long, long ago, came to his mind. She was only the dear, loving sister returning to brighten his life.

“ And I mean to nurse you back to health, my poor Edward, and we will have some of our old happy days again,” she sweetly said, trying to be cheerful.

He listened in silence, but smiled wearily and sadly. His head drooped forward until it lay on her breast, and he said he knew he would always be happy now that she had returned to him.

All that day he was never contented unless she was sitting beside him—with his hand clasped in hers. He did not manifest much interest in the presence of either Dr. Wayne or little Agnes ; his every thought was absorbed in “ sister Agnes ” alone.

But Dr. Wayne was not the least bit jealous or annoyed to see his wife sitting beside Edward so lovingly. On the contrary he was pleased she should do so, and pitied Edward deeply as he observed the poor fellow's miserable state of health.

“ By the way, Robert,” said Louis, later in the day, “ how is it that you kept the secret of this little fairy's birth from us ? ”

He fondled the little girl tenderly as she sat on his knee,

and smiled as the dark eyes solemnly stared up at him—in a way that left but little doubt that she had crept into his heart.

Not for worlds would Estelle say that she had made several attempts to communicate the news to him, but whenever she had even mentioned Agnes's name, he had commanded her to be silent. But Dr. Wayne, guessing at the truth, returned :

“Why, the fact is, Agnes and I, thought you wouldn't care to hear.”

“Humph !” retorted Bonnard. “Had I known about it, we might all have been reunited years ago. Wouldn't you have liked to have known me all the time, little one ?”

He laid his cheek against the child's velvety face, and twined the soft curls round his fingers as he waited for her answer. But she had no answer to give beyond to smile up at him in an uncertain way, and gently caress his hand.

“I'll warrant,” continued Bonnard, “that you don't love me—do you ?”

“Oh, yes, I do,” returned little Agnes, sweetly. “I loved you even before I had seen you, because my father told me about you so often, and he said I must love you, because you were so good.”

A thrill of pleasure shot through Bonnard's heart. They had taught their child to love him, while he had resolutely been trying to forget, and turn his heart against them. Ah, that was love and friendship of a verity ! And if he made no remark to tell how pleased he was, it was because his heart was too full to express his feelings in words.

When Agnes is alone with Estelle in her own pretty little room, and she observes with what loving care everything has been sacredly left unchanged, her heart is deeply touched.

As she sits in one of the pretty easy chairs and looks about, it seems as though she had never left home. She sees her reflection in the long, white-framed mirror almost the same as it was when she looked at herself seven years ago. There is but little change, except that she is a trifle older in appearance. The sweet face is just as it always was : cultured, serious, and loving. She turns away with a smile, and sees Estelle looking at her, and hears the question :

“Have you been happy all the while you were away !”

The question is somewhat embarrassing, and brings the blushes to her cheeks and her eyes are cast down. But in another moment, she is kneeling beside Estelle, and with their arms about each other, she tells the story in a trembling voice :

“No,” she says ; “I was not happy at first. He was al-

ways good and kind to me, but I was never at peace with myself. There was ever before my mind the picture of the dear old home. I wondered what you thought of me, and my heart was almost broken when I concluded that you must all hate me. Then, too, the people amongst whom we lived—believing I was *his* wife—respected me, and I felt myself utterly unworthy of their kind regard, and was intensely miserable—although, God knows, the contempt I felt for myself was deep enough to have made me so. My only comfort was in Robert's love. I knew him to be the soul of honor and goodness, and therefore never feared that he would desert me. But at last perfect happiness became mine. He returned home one day with a letter from his lawyer explaining about his wife's death, and we were married at once. Yet he was human enough to feel sorry as he thought of her pitiful death, and their bitter parting. Well, we were happy after that, and our darling girl brought if possible, deeper joy to our hearts. But the longing to return to the old home, to see you all, to kneel again beside my childhood's bed, and thank God for his kindly blessings, it seemed was to remain unfulfilled. But, Edward, poor boy! has been the means of bringing it about—and now I am happy—happier than I ever thought I should be! But," she continued after a thoughtful pause, "I shudder to think what my life might have been had I intrusted myself in the hands of a different man——"

"Think no longer of it, dear," interrupted Estelle, kindly; "but be thankful that it is as it is. Agnes, dear," she said a little later, "try and convince Robert that you will not like to leave Brooklyn. You can do that I am sure."

"Oh, yes," Agnes replied with a bright smile, "I could never bear to part with you all again. Besides, Robert has already arranged his plans. He is going to get a house near here, where we will live—for home and old friends are best after all."

Estelle was delighted with this news, and declared that it corresponded with her own imagined plans for their future.

That night long after the others were asleep, Agnes was rejoicing over her perfect happiness.

* * * * *

The light of the shaded lamp is turned very low in Edward's sick room, and falls softly upon the invalid's pale, thin face. His eyes are resting on the woman beside him, in a glance of love and tenderness too deep for utterance. He softly pats her hand as it lays in his, and whispers her name:

“ Agnes.”

She bends over him, and smiling sweetly, asks him if he wishes anything ; but he answers “ no,” and pats her hands and face with lingering caress. She can hardly hold back her tears, for every little while he goes through the same thing, and never seems to weary of having her near.

Poor Edward is dying ! The doctors have said that he can last but a few days, and naturally the whole household is overcome with grief—for all loved him well. Agnes is always with him now. But he is not dying with his memory clouded. In the hours of death all is clear to him—all that occurred in the past ! Thus far he had not spoken much since the recovery of his memory, beyond to express to Agnes that he knows that what had happened was for the best. He also made his will, leaving everything he possessed to be equally shared between little Agnes Wayne, and his God-son, Master Edward Bonnard.

Some minutes pass in silence after Agnes has drawn back from him. In a little while he pats her hand again and whispers her name. But, unlike the time before, when she bends over him with her familiar smile and question, he returns that he wants to speak to her about when they were lovers. He smiles very bravely to assure her that it does not pain him to speak of it now, and she tells him she will listen. His voice is very faint and broken when he speaks, but he manages to say :

“ I cannot help but think Agnes, how very correct my mother’s judgment of your love for me was. I don’t mean to intimate that you are incapable of affection—for I know differently—nor do I mean to reproach you, for you were not to blame because your heart turned to another. I knew very little in comparison to what you did, dear, but I thought my love could make up for deficiencies in other directions. It never occurred to me that we were unfitted for each other, but it is so. You could never have been proud of me as you are of Dr. Wayne ; and in time, although you would have been too generous and noble to ever admit it to be so, still you would have wearied of me, and I should have been miserable knowing you had ceased to care for me. Don’t try to convince me otherwise, dear Agnes, for indeed, I assure you, that it gives me pleasure to believe so, when I think that my life might have been very, very miserable—whereas, it has been comparatively happy. You were always tender and loving to me, my dearest, and may God bless you for it ! Believe me,

Agnes, I am happy in the thought that I will soon be at rest ; although it is hard to part with you all. You will think of me sometimes though, won't you, Agnes, of how I've loved you—and—and——"

His voice faltered, and broke in a choking sob ; he clasped her hand closer and his eyes were full of beseeching as he raised them to her face.

She laid her trembling lips to his brow, and murmured sweet words of comfort and loving assurance that as long as she lived she would never cease to think of him ; and gradually the smile comes back to his lips and he says :

"I don't think that it is quite right, dear, for me to tell you how I hate to die, but it is so heart-breaking. Never again to see even little Ned, or have him tease me—the rascal ! Never to speak to Uncle, Louis, and Estelle again, who have all been so very kind to me—these many, many years. The doctor too, I bear him no malice, and your little one—I could have loved them both for your sake, dear. But never to rest my eyes again upon this dear face——" he lifted his trembling hands as he spoke, and put one on each side of her face, and softly and lovingly caressed her— "ah, this is hard to bear ! Even though I will know nothing of it in death, it is bitterest agony to me to think *now* that my eyes can rest but a short while longer on you. I had thought so many, many years were yet to be spent with you, dearest—to share in your happiness, so you can understand how disappointing it is. But, 'there is light at the eventide,' my Agnes ! In a higher and nobler sphere we will meet again, dear, where peace and joy and love will reign supreme."

He seemed to gain great comfort from this last thought, and begged Agnes to pass her soothing hand over his forehead until he would fall asleep. * * * * * *

It is again night. Agnes is sitting by poor Edward's bedside, his hand in hers, watching him with an agonized look. It is so terrible to think that he must die when only so very lately they have been reunited. Could death but be put off for a few years at least, how happy she would have made him. Not a moment of sorrow should he have known that she could have saved him from. Suddenly his eyes open wide and he whispers her name. She bends over him anxiously.

"I am slipping away from you, Agnes—slipping away, dear—I shall soon be gone ! Tell them I want to see them all once more before I die."

His face is ghastly. His eyes have in them a far-away ex-

pression, and his voice is scarcely audible as he speaks. But Agnes guesses his desires from the terrible change that has suddenly come over him, and hurries to a room adjoining where Dr. Wayne is asleep on a lounge. She awakens him and sends him to awaken the others, and then goes back to Edward.

Yes, this is death! The monster which no power can fight against, when once he has come to claim!

They gathered around the bedside, with frightened looks and trembling limbs. He gazes upon them, then faintly whispers:

“God bless you all!”

His eyes rest on the sweet, serious, loving face then, that is bending over him, and he smiles while his lips form in the pronunciation of her name—although no sound issues from them. So he gazes into her eyes for a few moments, and then she bends lower still until her lips touch the cold ones beneath her. When she looked into his eyes, after raising her head, she knew that he was dead.

Dead! Oh, what consolation is there for the grief stricken friends who witness the passing away of one of their loved number? As Agnes looked into the poor face, bitter tears coursed down her cheeks—she felt that she was to blame for his death. It seemed to her that her cruelty in their love affair, however unintentional it had been, had eaten into his heart, and death had in some way resulted from that sole cause. There seemed to be no consolation for her anguish; but suddenly, like a radiant, pitying light cast from a higher sphere came the recollection of his words: “There is light at the eventide.”

These words seemed to breathe of such sweet peace that a smile came to her lips as she looked into his face. Yes, he was at rest!—and how contented he looked! His lips were frozen into a smile of unutterable happiness! No, she would not recall him from that beautiful sleep if she could.

“There is light at the eventide!” Oh, hallowed words, what sweet promise do they hold forth to those who suffer. Greater than untold riches is the comfort of their spiritual hope. Like a helping hand stretched out to save and bring joy to darkened hearts and souls again, do they light the path of our lives with their shining star of peaceful promise! And so, in moments of darkest agony and grief, when mortal power can avail nothing to sustain our misery, let us remember the exquisite words so full of pitying love and comfort:

“There is light at the eventide.”

THE END.

VAN HOUTEN'S

*"Chops and
tomato sauce
are excellent, my
dear Mr. Pardell,
but let the liquid
be Van Houten's
Cocoa."*

*"It is a glorious
restorative after
a fatiguing
journey."*



COCOA.

Mr. Pickwick.

"Best & Goes Farthest."

The Standard Cocoa of the World.

A Substitute for Tea & Coffee.

Better for the Nerves and Stomach.

Cheaper and more Satisfying.

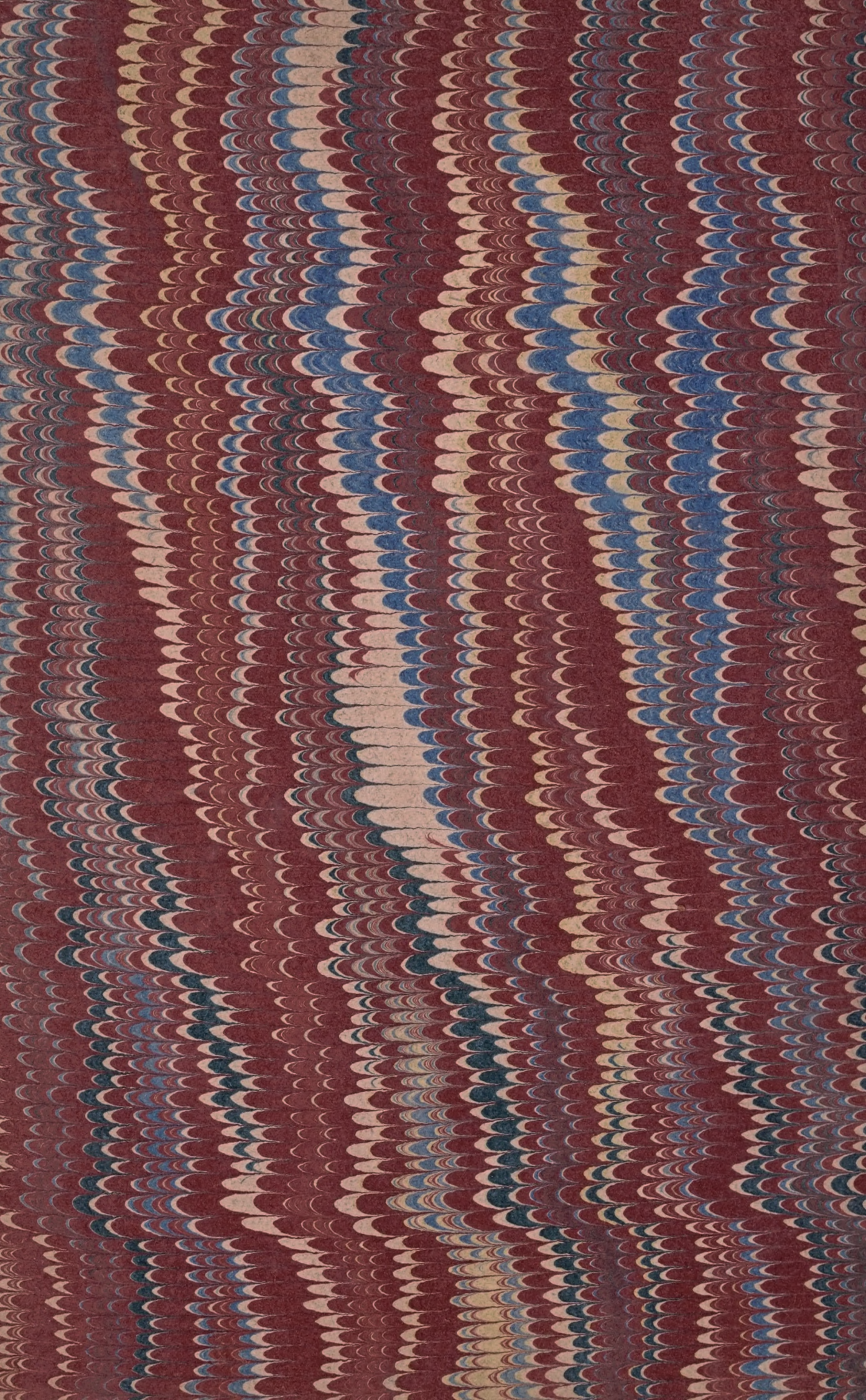
At all Grocers. Ask for VAN HOUTEN'S.

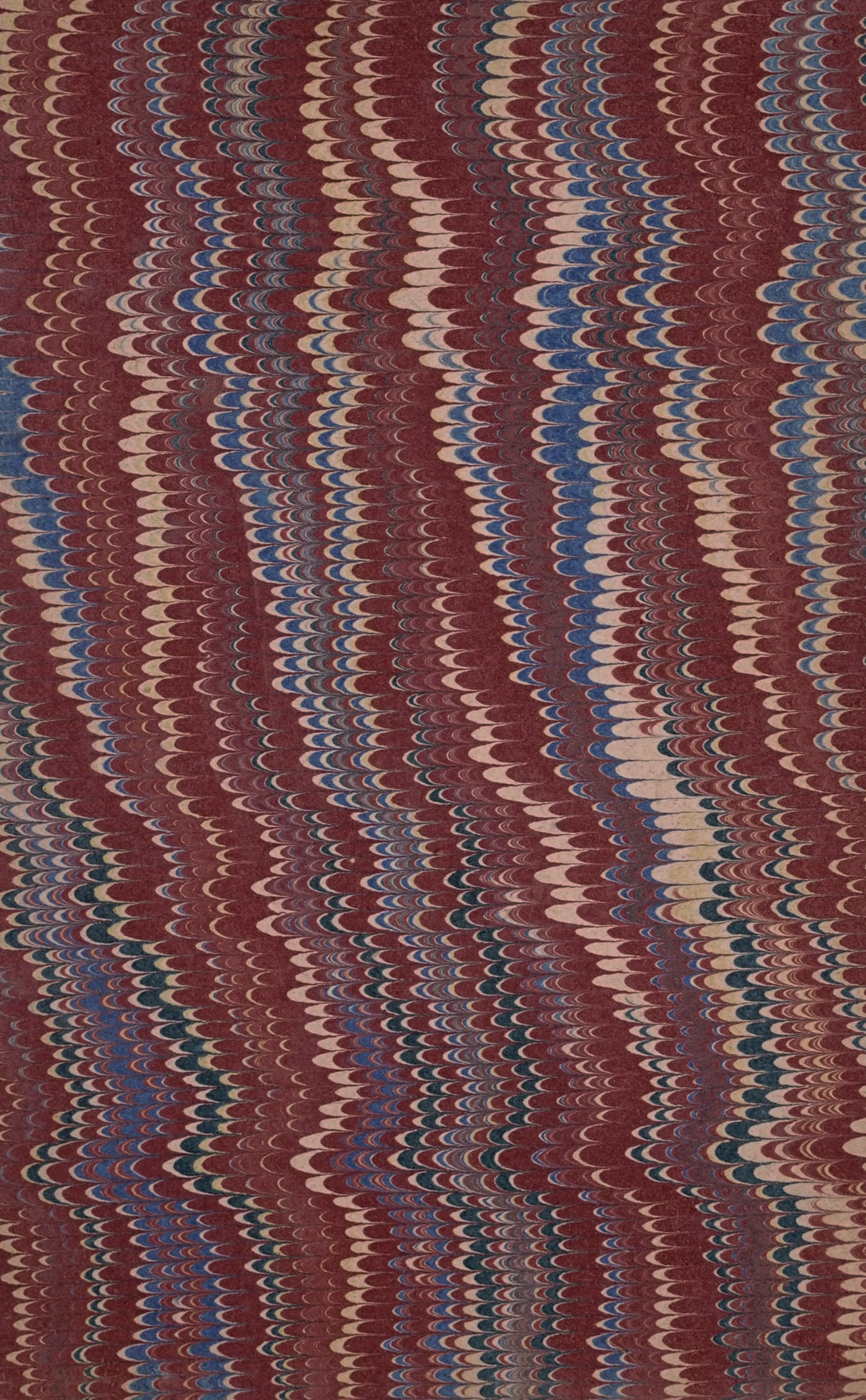
Perfectly Pure—"Once tried, used always."

 A comparison will quickly prove the great superiority of VAN HOUTEN'S COCOA. **Take no substitute.** Sold in 1-8, 1-4, 1-2 and 1 lb. Cans.  If not obtainable, enclose 25c. in stamps or postal note to either VAN HOUTEN & ZOON, 106 Reade Street, New York, or 45 Wabash Ave., Chicago, and a can containing enough for 35 to 40 cups will be mailed if you mention this publication. Prepared only by the inventors, VAN HOUTEN & ZOON, Weesp, Holland.



Colgate & Co's Cashmere Bouquet Toilet Soap and Perfumes are the most perfect of all toilet articles. The materials of which the soap is made have the most soothing and beneficial effect upon the skin and complexion. The perfume for the handkerchief is a rare combination of the odors of many sweet flowers, grown expressly for Colgate & Co.





LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00022961974